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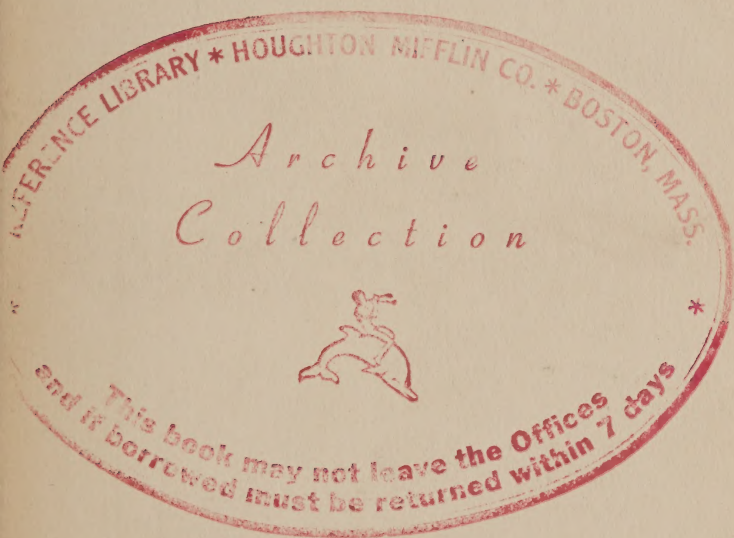
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By *Eugenia Brooks Frothingham*

HER ROMAN LOVER. Illustrated.

THE EVASION.

THE TURN OF THE ROAD.

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK

Her Roman Lover



(p. 124)

HER BEWILDERMENT WAS EVIDENTLY COMPLETE



Her Roman Lover



Eugenia Brooks Frothingham



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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*“ Oh, East is East, and West is West,
and never the twain shall meet.”*

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From drawings by Alice Barber Stephens

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CHAPTER I

IN THE CRIMSON SALON

TWILIGHT was coming into the great Roman salon where a slender American girl sat alone. On both sides of her were more rooms, large and vaulted, built by the great prince of a bygone age for the reception of other princes and their friends: a powerful and gorgeously iniquitous company, whose names survive in history and still lend a glamour to the visiting lists of Roman ladies.

It was long since the rooms had been emptied of this company, and in recent years the apartment had fallen into the hands of people from a new world, who had made of it a beautiful thing, such as it had been in the past, and rented it to friends just arrived from the same new world, who found themselves as much awed as it was in their nature to be, by surroundings of such vastness and dignity.

The little American girl looked very small and slight as she sat there alone in the dim and spacious room, which was hung splendidly with crimson damask, the crimson of so many Roman rooms

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that has faded during a century or so till the shrill reds of it are become mellowed into hints of pink. Regal chairs, high-backed and deep-seated, covered with the same damask, stood about in the comfortable and informal angles dear to modern eyes. A large table of black oak held bowls of flowers, and a few almost priceless carvings of old ivory, — things that showed vaguely through the gathering dusk, like the pale oval of the girl's face, and the silver-pale fairness of her hair.

She was sitting close to a faint gleam of firelight, and her eyes were turned toward the window, where trees whose leaves were yellowing in the frosts of early winter showed against the sky. She sat quite motionless, seeming to watch the trees, while in the room dusk grew and grew, shadows gathering thickest in the domed ceiling that hung so far above her, and flowing down till they possessed the chamber utterly, and the little American disappeared in a vast gloom.

A feminine voice, clear, decided, and definitely modern, called suddenly from a distance.

"Anne, where are you?"

"Here," answered Anne, from the darkness.

"If I could only find a light!" The voice, complaining humorously, was nearer. "The butler has forgotten my orders again, which is not to be won-

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dered at, since he probably did not understand them. Ah!"

The room became visible suddenly as the speaker entered it and touched an electric button near the door. But the light was reticent: it left shadows and the dignity of things not wholly revealed. It also showed touches of modern life, small low tables holding glass bowls of flowers, a book or two carelessly left as though from recent reading, and a silver tea-set evidently prepared for immediate use.

The woman who had just entered was a large and energetic creature, whose strongly moulded and handsome features expressed decision and independence. Perfect health of both body and mind was her great charm, and it could be felt by the sensitive observer that her character was broad, positive, benign like the daylight, and, like the daylight, without dimness or mystery.

She was not many years older than her niece, whose face seemed not yet to have emerged wholly from the recently banished twilight. The girl's features were moulded with a certain tenderness, as though by a hand that made her for response to life rather than endurance of it. It was evident that she would suffer quickly, and with an intensity possible only to those in whom nerves and imagin-

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ation are vital forces. The buoyancy of youth, combined with candidness and poise of mental vision, relieved her personality of a something unsubstantial which was felt by those who saw her in moods of silence.

“How long have you been here? and why did n’t you ring for tea?” asked the older woman.

“I don’t know,” answered Anne vaguely. She bent forward, patting her soft hair into shape as she examined the tea-urn. “The lamp is out,” she said, still vaguely.

“Of course it is. I should ring for the butler at once if I knew how to speak to him. Where are the matches? Thank you. Now at last we shall have something hot. That fire—” She looked scornfully at the tiny grate with its flickering logs, but placed herself before it. Her excellent circulation was not proof against what was to her the chill of Italian rooms, and she wore a small Shetland jacket over her silk waist. Anne had not yet removed the furs she had been walking in.

“I do not know how we are to keep warm when the winter really sets in,” continued her aunt. “There are only these absurd fireplaces in the whole apartment, and one or two dreadful things the Romans have the impudence to call ‘American stoves.’ Sometimes, Anne, I wonder if we have not

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undertaken more than we are equal to. We have now been here two weeks and I do not yet know how to pronounce my butler's name. It seems impossible to call him Dionysius to his face."

"I think it is Dioniseo," said Anne, with a good Italian accent; "and oh, Aunt Margaret, he is such a beautiful, wonderful butler!"

Her aunt was unresponsive. "He is too wonderful," she said, and, looking above her, she added, "What enormous wall-space! I wonder why they made the ceiling so very high above the floor."

Margaret Garrison had little temperamental understanding of her niece, but in their own land they belonged among those people whose culture and comparative wealth are inherited possessions. Since their country had become a nation, generations of their grandfathers had stood for something in the statesmanship and scholarship of national life. Generations of their grandmothers had moved through the social world with stately consciousness of supremacy in it. They had not usually been very rich, for the men of that day had other occupations than money-making. The industrial furnace of modern American life had not yet been cast, and the "aristocracy of wealth" was unknown.

But however different in temperament, certain

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of their inherited ideals were identical, and they were both possessed of a seriousness of character which colored their view of life, and the sense of their relation to it. In the older woman this seriousness took the practical form of utilitarian works, in the girl it found expression in periods of thoughtfulness, and an occasional brooding which was not always a happy one.

Margaret Garrison had never been to Europe before, and now gave up her New England home for the winter because of her husband, who had suffered a dangerous breakdown from nervous strain on the stock exchange, and been ordered to cruise on a sailing vessel. One had been found bound for African ports, and expecting to arrive in the Mediterranean toward spring.

It was in expectation of this arrival, as well as in order to remain upon the same hemisphere with her husband, that Margaret had decided to spend the winter in Rome, and invite her niece to go with her.

Anne's mother had died when she was a baby, and her father, an amiable and futile person, was quite willing that his daughter should fall into safe hands and leave him free to follow the golf ball through its seasonable migrations.

But now after two weeks of the experiment Mrs.

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Garrison stood shivering by an ineffective fire and wondering if she had made a mistake.

"What were you thinking about all alone in the dark?" she asked.

"I was thinking how wonderful it was to be in Rome, and trying to imagine that the spirits of all the wicked men and beautiful women who had walked through these rooms were crowding about me."

"Then I think it is time you had your tea. Mrs. Wallace was here soon after you went out, and she told me things about Roman society which made me feel that I should not have brought a child like you into it. It might have been better to have presented no letters and kept ourselves busy with sight-seeing."

"What did Mrs. Wallace tell you that was so dreadful about Roman society?" asked the girl.

"It seems—" Margaret hesitated before continuing; "it seems quite an immoral world."

"We are not immoral," said Anne. "No one could mistake us for that, and it will be fun to look on at the others who—may be! For my part, I love this dear, mysterious old world, and I don't care how wicked it is."

At this moment Dioniseo appeared noiselessly with a card on the silver plate.

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"Who can it be?" wondered Anne, looking at it. "Gino Curatulo. Do you remember the name?"

"No, but then I cannot remember any of their names. Ask him if it is a gentleman."

Dioniseo, who was indeed a beautiful butler with the smile of warm and radiant friendliness which belongs to so many Italian servants, replied, indeed, yes. All society knew Signor Curatulo; many a time had he, Dioniseo, served him at dinners, and taken special charge of his coat at evening receptions.

"I think he must be the Italian I talked with so long at the Von Liebnitzes'," said Margaret, when Anne had translated. "He is very dark, very foreign, but seems nice, and is quite young, though he has been to Africa and knows some of the ports Tom is to visit. I asked him to call, which was quite wrong, they say, because in Rome the men one meets always leave their cards as a matter of course. I suppose he thought me an ignorant person, which is just what I am. Ask him to come in, and we will have some fresh tea. *Ancora — thé,*" she said, waving her hand toward the table and addressing Dioniseo, who smiled again, assuring the Signora that she would soon speak perfect Italian.

"I think I remember Curatulo," said Anne. "He talked with you some time, and was pointed

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out to me as an explorer who no longer explores and a writer who no longer writes. It is strange that, being still young, he should have done so much and already stopped doing it."

To the American women Gino Curatulo could not seem other than an extravagantly foreign figure as he presented himself before them. There was an exquisitely careful elaboration to his dress; he wore a *boutonnière*, and had a monocle suspended from his neck, his short mustache tipped gallantly upward, and as he bowed to the married woman he carried her hand to his lips. These things, added to an excessive swarthiness of skin and the slight accent of his otherwise excellent English, made him appear to Margaret an almost artificial figure. An Italian marquis in an American play would be "made up" in much the same way and seem no more improbable; but Margaret Garrison had never been to Europe before, nor conceived of other type of manliness than that represented by the comparatively large-boned and simply-dressed man of her own land, nor of other manners than his informal, undecorative courtesy.

Anne had traveled more. The Latin gentleman, as seen in the best hotels and restaurants, was not unknown to her, but she was conscious that never before had she conversed with so highly finished a

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product of the social world in which she was about to make her first adventure.

Neither aunt nor niece was aware with what penetrating curiosity his well-trained European eyes were looking upon them, nor could they have imagined that they seemed strange to him, as belonging to a type of American to which he was unaccustomed. Their simplicity and social unconsciousness, something of unworldliness and lack of coquetry in their dress, — Mrs. Garrison had not troubled to remove her Shetland jacket before his entrance, — were unusual, and seemed a little crude to the Italian, though refreshing to a vision inured as his was to the cultivation of charm, the attempt to attract, which, in greater or less degrees of subtlety, are evident in all the women of his world.

The features of Gino Curatulo were not insignificant, and though Anne could not have told in what part of the Italian's face were evidences of a violent and uncontrolled life, she felt that such life was there, and to a degree that was lacking in her American friends; but where the aunt disliked such things as were different from those she had known, the niece delighted in them and was not displeased with the visitor as he bowed to her low and formally, giving her one swift glance from intelligent and expressive eyes.

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Etiquette demanded that he should talk to the married woman, and he did so; though he looked frequently at the young girl who sat silently a little in the shadow. It was not usual for American girls to be silent and sit in the shadow, and Curatulo had known many Americans. He felt that she was watching him, but felt it without embarrassment, and talked quietly to her aunt in the almost perfect English spoken by so many Romans.

"You have here a charming apartment," he said. "I do not know of another at once so beautiful, so dignified, and so like a home. There was no comfort in Roman rooms until Americans and English came to live among us."

"Do you not complain that there are too many Americans among you?" asked Mrs. Garrison.

The Italian looked from one to the other of his hostesses with a slight and friendly smile. "Madame, you will find some here who are not—as yourselves."

"I suppose you know them all?"

"All? No, madame, I am not so much sought after as that. Some—yes."

"I have been hearing a great deal about your Roman world, American, English, and otherwise. Do you advise me to introduce this child to it?"

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His eyes turned again to Anne, and lingered there as though wishing she would speak.

Anne smiled at him. "I am quite old," she said.

His eyes still lingered upon her though he did not reply. He was thinking that never before had he seen hair so pale, or skin so fair.

"You find here a world — like any other," he said, turning to the older woman.

"But there I cannot agree with you," she answered decidedly. "All worlds are different, all worlds and all men. You, Mr. Curatulo — Do I pronounce it correctly?"

"Charmingly, madame."

"You are different, very different from any one we have ever seen before."

He laughed, a pleasant laugh that was slightly subdued. Anne remembered the pleasantness after he had gone ; she also remembered that it had been subdued, and wondered whether life or courtesy had made it so.

"I shall hope to prove to you and Miss Warren before the end of the season that we are not strangers," he said.

They spoke again of the waters and ports visited by the absent husband, and Curatulo seemed to know them all.

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"I do not understand how, living in Rome so many years, you have still found time to travel so much," said Margaret.

"When I was very young I was fond of joining exploring parties," he explained simply. "And I have also seen some volunteer service in our African colonies. When my mother was ill I came home to be with her and — I have stayed."

"They tell me," said Margaret, "that you Latins care more for your mothers than do the men of my own race."

"From what I have heard, madame, it seems to be true. Love of the mother is a cult with us Italians. I have friends who have given the devotion of their life to their mothers. She was their actual Romance, whom no sweetheart — no wife — could displace."

"And when your mother was well again you did not go back?"

"I never went back — " A look of unmistakable and profound sadness came suddenly into his face, and he paused, looking into his tea-cup as though seeing through it into some unhappy memory.

"I should think that after a splendid free life such as you have known in Africa, you would often find this life, the fashionable life of a large city, very dull," said Margaret.

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“Who says that I do not find it often very dull,” he answered, and putting down his tea-cup he rose. “Madame, I have already stayed beyond the limit of time prescribed by good manners. Please forgive me.”

“Yes, if you will come again and stay just as long,” answered Margaret, with her frank and pleasant smile.

“I shall be happy if I may come often enough to persuade you that I am not a strange animal, but a man like others you have met,” he said ; and though he answered Mrs. Garrison, his eyes as he spoke were upon Anne Warren.

The smile on his dark and recently sombre face was like an irradiation, and the life and warmth of it held an almost magnetic charm for the two Americans. He appeared to them a distinguished figure of mobile and expressive personality, lit by the flame of a great variety of feelings.

“How delightful he is, — in spite of being a foreigner,” exclaimed the older woman the moment her guest was out of hearing.

“Is not a foreigner a man?” asked Anne mockingly ; “is he not warmed with heat, and chilled with cold ? does he not hunger and thirst, as we do ?”

Her face had lost its look of reverie, and was now alert with pleasure.

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“I wonder,” she added, “why he looked so unhappy when he spoke of staying in Rome after his mother’s illness. He was thinking of something or some one — I think it was some one — who was not his mother.”

CHAPTER II

THE ROMANCE OF GINO

THE old stone palace in which Margaret Garrison had made her winter home stood on a slight eminence that lifted it above and away from a squalid region of uncleanly, crowded, and incredibly noisy streets. It stood aloof from these things, withdrawn from them as much by significance as by space. From the surrounding flood of turbid life a short avenue wound upwards under large trees, past a gray stone parapet, a crumbling statue, a simple fountain in which water splashed unceasingly, to the *portone* under which passed the carriages and automobiles that carried fashionable life to and from the strangers who occupied the *piano nobile* on the first floor. In these early winter days leaves, yellow and brown, were falling into the fountain and on the parapet of gray and ancient stone. The sunlight shone briefly over the high damp walls of inclosing houses, and whether the spot was occupied by the carriages and footmen of modern pleasure-seekers, or whether it was empty and silent, the old palace and its approach kept their atmosphere in-

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violate. People could remove nothing from its mood of grave and quiet reverie; silence could add nothing to its dignity and sadness.

To the bright-haired American girl who came and went daily under its trees, the spot had a penetrating charm. Sometimes it quieted her. Sometimes it would make her more joyous for pure æsthetic delight in having a background of such ancient stateliness to her happy, eager days.

Her aunt did not share the girl's enthusiasm. "My blood is older and colder than yours," she said; "I like these places to look at, but they seem chilly and dreary and altogether too historical to live in."

"Do you really, really prefer your own white-painted and immaculate vestibule on the sunny side of the avenue?" asked Anne.

"I really, really do," replied Mrs. Garrison, with decision.

It was a few days after Gino Curatulo's visit, and they were on their way to an evening reception.

"I wonder if Curatulo will be there," said Anne.

"Why did you talk to him so little when he called?" asked Margaret.

"I did not feel like talking, and was amused watching you make friends with the enemy, seeing

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you converse almost cordially with one whom I know you regard as a mere *flâneur* — a man of fashion."

"It must be because he seems a link with the part of the world where Tom is," said Margaret weakly. "I suppose," she added, "that Curatulo is just what you say — a *flâneur*, a man of fashion. He certainly looks it."

"He certainly looks it, and he probably is it," said Anne. "He is probably also a few things besides. In the French Revolution, dandies showed that they could die like men."

"I had rather they lived like men," said Margaret dryly. "And I don't call it living like a man to pass from one woman's salon to another and spend the remaining hours strolling on the Corso."

"It is an incredible life," said Anne warmly. "It is a detestable one," she added, as the limousine drove under a sombre stone entrance and stopped by a liveried porter who opened the door.

Mrs. Garrison was growing accustomed to Roman entrances, but this one was unusually stony, chilly, and vast. As she and her niece climbed up two huge flights of stairs she murmured resentfully that there was no sign of an elevator.

"You must learn to say 'lift' on this side of the water," said Anne gayly, from several steps above.

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“Dear Aunt Margaret, do be amused. Do think it unique and picturesque and charming that we should be entering this unknown world, this frivolous world playing about among the ruins and palaces of such a splendid and terrible past. A French hat, a cup of tea, a flirtation, in the hall where a Borgia planned a murder! And you and I, Aunt Margaret, you and I, who have never had anything but our doctors and lawyers and brokers to play with, — hard-hearted men who were not disposed to be charmed with us, even supposing they had time for it, — finding ourselves in the company of diplomats of all nations, of ambassadors, of princes, of monsignores — all so willing, so eager to be charmed!”

“Take care how you charm them too much,” said her aunt.

In the apartment of the American hostess who was entertaining them there were too many servants by the door, and in the rooms a surplus of adornment. Priceless things from India, from Japan, from Egypt, were heaped upon one another, tacked to walls, ceilings, and furniture, and each year, as a guest remarked, “there appear some more.” The hostess herself was a noisy and cordial person, whose hospitality, if a little blatant, was actually warm-hearted and recognized as such. All

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Rome came to her sooner or later, "blacks" and "whites" alike being included within the orbit of her entertainments, where she was a predominating influence, moving her guests here and there as she chose, and introducing one to another in the American fashion, with a lack of discrimination that was becoming gradually tempered by her knowledge of a cosmopolitan world. A large part of the Roman aristocracy are, unlike the French and Austrian, friendly to strangers, and willing to be entertained by them; so they came in numbers to Mrs. Wallace's house, where the diplomats went as a matter of course, and many Americans and English, distinguished or otherwise.

Anne looked about her with curiosity and delight upon a company assembled from many nations, full of color and possible adventure, and knew that her aunt's success, which would also be her own, was assured by the letters she had brought and her occupancy of one of the most beautiful and best-known apartments in Rome. This evening the girl met the Japanese ambassador, a tiny, delicate figure, mirthful as a boy, and talked with a liberal monsieur, an effective and dignified figure in his purple and black robes, who had a powerful head, ardent eyes, and the manners of an admiring courtier. It was wonderful to find herself in such sur-

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roundings and able to move with ease among them, to find so many things to talk about, and such responsive ardor in the talking. Finally she was noticed and sent for by old Lady Fitz-Smith, a compliment the import of which she hardly appreciated.

"I want you to sit by me," said the Dowager, drawing the girl to a sofa beside her. "I can tell you who everybody is, and you must try not to be bored."

Anne found herself being analyzed by a pair of kind if hardily inquisitive eyes, set in a heavy-featured face that could never have possessed beauty of any kind. The wig of brown hair was very evidently a wig, and an ill-fitting one, while the dress and velvet cape were old-fashioned and badly worn; but there was that weight and dignity to the Dowager's personality which can only come from a life-long and inherited consciousness of social supremacy.

"I want to talk to you because I am an old woman, and old women like sweet little girls, such as you look to be," said Lady Fitz-Smith, putting up her lorgnette shamelessly while she examined the slender and sensitive face beside her.

The face was not entirely un-English, with its slightly high cheek-bones and excessive fairness of skin; but the eyes of the American girl did not fall

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under the Dowager's scrutiny as those of her English cousins would have been likely to do. They even returned the gaze with one of almost equal curiosity, and finally with liking, for the commanding old face was also kind. Lady Fitz-Smith noted the same quality of unworldliness that had impressed Gino Curatulo when he called upon the two women, for Anne's dress, though charming in color and texture, was not at all "smart," and it was evident that she knew little of the subtle coquetry of European women.

The old woman smiled at her suddenly, and patted her hand. "You must tell me what you think of Rome," she said in a strong, warm voice, and the English that is so much richer, so much more ornate and excitable than our own. "But first I want to know what you think of these rooms."

Anne looked about her helplessly, and during the girl's slight confused silence Lady Fitz-Smith nodded her head with approval.

"I quite agree with you," she said. "Dear Mrs. Wallace! She has so much taste, and it is all bad. Why have they brought you to Rome, my dear? Not to marry a Roman, I hope."

Anne flushed. "I shall never marry out of my own country," she answered.

"Good girl!" said the Dowager, patting her

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hand again. "Two thirds of the Roman aristocracy have married Americans, which is so much the worse — for the Americans. But they have their titles, poor things, and that is what they wanted. Why are your country people so fond of titles — the very things your republic stands for repudiating? And you can't deny that you are fond of them, my dear, when you consider the number of your girls who marry worn-out English and continental aristocrats."

"Our best people do not marry your English and continental aristocrats," answered Anne, with a spirit that pleased the old Englishwoman and made her laugh.

"Whatever kind of people they are, they are foolish ones," she said. "Mixed marriages are rarely happy, especially when the mixture is Anglo-Saxon and Latin. I married an Italian myself, I don't know why, though I seem to remember thinking myself in love with him, and I had a little money. He was no worse than the rest of them; but when I found he had no intention of being true to me, nor ever had, I went home, and took my own name, though as a Catholic I could not divorce him. People said, 'Now it is your turn'; but I did not want my turn. I was tired of men; though if one had come that I liked, nobody knows what might

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not have happened. Here is Gino Curatulo. He came in five minutes ago and has been pretending to talk to Madame Lilienkron while he looked at you. Do you know him? Yes? Good! But be a little careful. He is always about some woman or other, and sometimes the woman — Do you know his romance?”

“Has he one?” asked Anne, forgetting her amazement at Lady Fitz-Smith’s frankness in her interest concerning Curatulo.

“He fell madly in love with Maria Pavlowa soon after his return to Rome, and the poor thing was wild about him, as every one could see. Her husband was a brute, and we all sympathized with them — with the Pavlowa and Curatulo, I mean. She was radiantly lovely when he was in the same room with her; when he left it she was dull, like a place from which the light has been taken. Often she looked frightened, and it was thought her husband maltreated her. Some of Curatulo’s friends tried to get him off to Africa again, for they feared that he would kill the man or be killed by him. He was mad enough and young enough to do anything, and would certainly have run off with her if her father had not come down from Russia and carried her back with him. Curatulo disappeared for some time, and it was thought that he tried to follow her,

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and had been seen in disguise near her house at St. Petersburg. After a while he came back, and we supposed he would take up his exploring again, or his writing ; but he did neither, and not long after the Pavlowa died. Since then he has done nothing, and his name has lately been connected with different women. The best of him died with the little Russian, and as he is quite poor, he is supposed to be looking for a fortune. *Chi lo sa?* There are some men who are born lovers, as others are born to paint pictures, or make money. Gino Curatulo may or may not be one of these, but in judging him it is well to remember that he is still young, and the same man who was willing to risk his life to run away with Maria Pavlowa. I tell you these things because he has been looking at you so persistently, and here he comes. Don't think it is entirely to see you, my child, for I am a great favorite of his, as he is of mine. Is it not true, Curatulo? I was just telling Miss Warren that I am a great favorite of yours."

"Indeed, yes," he said with his pleasant laugh, as he kissed her hand.

"I said something else, too, but she must not repeat it lest she spoil you."

"But I do not mind if he is spoiled," protested Anne ; "Lady Fitz-Smith says that you are also a favorite of hers."

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“It is true,” said the Dowager, nodding. “He is one of the few who take the trouble to be nice to an old woman.”

He kissed her hand again, and while he greeted Anne with some eagerness, Mrs. Wallace, followed by a few men, approached the group.

“Dear Lady Fitz-Smith knows that I love her more than anybody,” she said in her loud cordial voice, “but I cannot allow her to monopolize my new friend any longer;” and she presented two minor diplomats, whom Anne found amusing and amused in much the same way as the young men of her own country.

Curatulo sat by the Dowager and made no effort to join in the easy gayety of Anne’s conversation. Others came and went, and the groups shifted, but Anne knew that Curatulo never lost consciousness of her presence. Her sudden laugh would draw his eyes to her face, and now and then she felt him to be listening to her words as they reached him through the sound of other voices. The girl herself, while talking gayly and sweetly with the people about her, held in the background of her thoughts the story told by Lady Fitz-Smith, and she wondered how often the dark and dandified man, whose eyes so often sought her face, still remembered the dead woman whom he had risked so

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much to win, and if it was true that he had followed her in disguise to distant lands.

Curatulo profited by his first opportunity of speaking to Anne alone. "I have not had a word with you," he said, "and this is not as I had planned. I am sorry."

"I am glad that you are sorry," answered the girl, in a tone lighter than his own; but she flushed slightly, for there had come a sudden look of wistfulness into the dark Italian eyes.

It was just then that Mrs. Garrison, pleasantly excited by success, came to take Anne home, and she had no more words with Curatulo.

On the drive back her aunt expressed surprise that he had not talked with her more. "I thought he would be one of the men we saw something of," she said.

Anne laughed and turned her face away. Was it possible that Aunt Margaret had not seen? The girl was radiant and excited as a child on Christmas morning because of what she felt to be her new conquest, and of all the men she had met in Rome Gino Curatulo seemed to her the one most worth conquering, both by reason of the glamour lent to him by his desperate romance and of the intellectual distinction of his few writings.

"It is just as well for you not to see much of

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him," continued her aunt. "They say he is quite dangerous as well as frivolous, and once he had a *grande passion* for a married woman, whom he tried to run away with, instead of running away from her, and trying to conquer his feeling as a good man would have done."

Anne laughed again, for the words sounded curiously of home. Mrs. Garrison was not one who could change her atmosphere, or deviate from her mathematical standard of morality.

"Not try to conquer his feeling as a good man would have done." Anne repeated the words to herself, conscious of their grotesqueness as applied to a man like Gino Curatulo. With her suppleness of perception she was already conscious of a schism between the human atmosphere into which she had plunged, and the one she had left behind her at home. By loving a woman a man seemed to have established the right to win her if he could, independently of laws of church and state. Feeling rather than ethics was the supreme standard, and the little girl with her Puritan ancestors stood before such a spectacle amazed and bewildered.

"I wonder," she said aloud suddenly, "if it is true that some men are born to love women, and to do that better than they can do any other thing,

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just as some are born to paint pictures, or make money."

"They would be poor sort of men," answered Margaret.

"I wonder," said the girl again.

CHAPTER III

IN THE BORGHESE GARDENS

IN no city of Europe is there a public park comparable to that which Rome gave her citizens when she opened the gates of the Borghese Gardens. Here, among the wide avenues, the fountains, the ilex, the cypress, and the stone pine, is a place of romance, a spot which seems to have been created that man and woman might walk therein, and, walking, love.

Anne went often to the gardens, and claiming her American privilege of independence, she went alone, contrary to the Roman custom. Walking there in the sunshine she was possessed by the spirit of the place, and thought of love, though she smiled at herself for so thinking. Her heart was free: there was no man whose coming or going had the power to quicken her pulses; but she was in a world whose preoccupation with the relationship of men and women to one another was stirring her imagination. She saw men who conceived of woman as a being who existed only to be loved, and it was inevitable that she should resent such a conception.

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But it no longer seemed to her impossible that there might exist men whose supreme vocation it was to love.

She had been educated to the consciousness of an imperfect and unhappy world which needed the more or less strenuous attention of each individual: men and women must work in such a world, work either to win money and power which would make them less imperfect and unhappy than the rest, or work to comfort and save the rest. What room was there, then, for women who only existed to be loved, and men whose only vocation it was to love them? That such men and women were a paramount influence in the society about her was stirring her supple and sensitive nature. Her imagination was troubled. Instincts, dissatisfactions, longings which she had been dimly conscious of at home, or which had been awakened only by poetry, music, or some poignantly beautiful instant of earth or sky, were becoming definite things to her as she walked alone between the ilex trees of Roman gardens. She felt her youth, and youth without love suddenly appeared to her as a futile and abnormal thing. Were not those brief hours, those hours that must seem strange compared with the rest of life, the hours of passion, of wonder, of exquisite or terrible madness, worth all the others

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that one lived between the cradle and the grave? Men had loved her, for she had the power which is often found in women who are as quick to respond with nerves and imagination as they are slow to yield those depths of being which must be reached before love can take possession; but she found herself now regretting a coolness and fastidiousness of temperament which had made it impossible to yield, and it seemed both sad and ridiculous that life should send her only men whom she could not love.

On that same morning Gino Curatulo was also walking in the garden, and he met her face to face just by the fountain which is called the Fountain of the Horses, because of the equine heads which stand at the corners of its wide basin.

A broad and empty avenue stretched before and behind them, and on both sides paths led away into the shade of ilex trees, — a dense, vital, and almost resilient shade, unlike any other. The grave-like chill that lives in the shadows of semi-tropical countries was there also, and in the chill and darkness were more fountains, dimly seen, and a gray-white temple.

Anne was but vaguely conscious of these things as she stood by the fountain in the wide spaces of clear sunshine, and greeted the Italian, who stood

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close to her, shaking hands with scarce repressed eagerness.

In these surroundings he did not look so foreign as when she had first met him, and she was again conscious of a violence of life in him which made it impossible to feel in the man and the situation that something of the unreal which the Anglo-Saxon associates with the Latin ; though his carefully selected *boutonnière*, his slightly upturned mustache, the over-elaboration of his dress made him, as Margaret had said, a figure such as one would put upon an American stage to represent the foreign nobleman, the adventurer, or the villain.

“Is it indiscreet to ask of what you have been thinking while you walked so slowly this long time ?” he asked.

“The question is not so indiscreet as an answer might be,” she answered, recalling the thoughts in question with some confusion ; “but have you seen me ‘this long time’ ?”

“I have seen you since many minutes. Does it annoy you that I watched you ?” he asked, quick to interpret her expression.

“Yes,” she answered frankly.

“I am sorry. I promise not to do so again. The next time —” He smiled, and his smile was rendered extraordinarily brilliant as much by its sud-

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den illumination of expression as by the vivid flash of white teeth in his dark face; and Anne found herself as though hypnotized to smile in return. "The next time," he continued, "I shall not watch, I shall speak to you at once—if I may." The last three words were added as a mechanical tribute to good manners.

He was observing her attentively, and few details of her severe little walking-suit escaped him; but he found its very severity and lack of display refreshing, and looked at the wing of clear scarlet which lay against her hair as though he adored it.

Anne was aware of the look, and began to enjoy herself immensely.

"I did not expect to meet you in the gardens," she said. "They tell me that in the morning, when one may not make calls, you walk upon the Corso, or stand about opposite the big café with other men, watching the people who pass."

"So they have spoken to you of me, and you have listened."

"What they told me was interesting," said Anne, "for in the stories you were not always standing in front of a café." She paused suddenly, regretting that in her play she had touched on a grave subject.

"Is it permitted that we walk a little together?"

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he asked after a slight pause ; and from a sudden seriousness of manner she knew that he understood.

They went up the wide avenue side by side and were almost alone, for at that late morning hour the garden is deserted.

“It is Lady Fitz-Smith who spoke of me to you?”

“There were others.”

“She is my friend ; there are others !” He shrugged his shoulders and smiled unpleasantly.

“There are some who say you are frivolous, and waste your life.”

“There are many in this city who do worse things with their lives than wasting them,” answered Gino dryly.

“In my country it is considered a very wicked thing to waste a life,” said Anne.

“Yours must be a strange, a terrible country,” he answered, evidently amused by her gravity on such a subject. “For us it is already much that we do no harm.”

“That cannot be,” she protested, “or you would never have had a *Risorgimento*.”

“Let us say, then, that to me it is enough that I do no harm.”

“But the world needs us — each one of us,” she cried.

Gino Curatulo swung his cane and looked at her

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sideways. "Pooh!" he said, and it seemed to her that there was a dancing madness of gayety in his eyes; "forgive me if I say, 'Pooh!' to any words of yours," he added, "but when you talk so of a man's duty, what else can I reply?"

"I do not understand you," said Anne. "Do you not recognize the duty of man to work in some way for other men?"

"I certainly do not if he prefers to do nothing," he answered with decision and evident sincerity.

Anne considered the remark for a while in silence as she walked beside him, and was surprised to find that it did not displease her more. She even found something of charm in the audacity of his claim to individual freedom of action.

"If it is the duty of man to work, what becomes of women?"

"In my city many women work also."

"And at what, may I ask, do they work?"

"At such things as Civil Service Reform, pure-food regulations, and endless charities."

Signor Curatulo paused in his walk and looked at the American girl with evident stupefaction.

"Surely," he said, "it is only the plain and the unattractive women who do such work."

"No, indeed," she answered. "Some of the leaders in these movements are beautiful and charming

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women. But in my country women are under an obligation to be something else than charming."

"What a strange race of women will grow up among you!"

"It is a different world, a different world," she said half aloud, expressing her bewilderment at his point of view.

He did not answer, and seemed to await further expression of her perplexity. When it came it surprised him.

"We are ethical," she said. "You are atavistic. Yes, in spite of your forms, your etiquettes, your elaboration of ceremonies, you are nearer atavism than we are!"

"Nearer atavism!" he murmured; "it is astounding!"

"Perhaps you do not understand the word in English," she suggested.

"I understand it so perfectly that if I did not look at you I should think myself talking with a professor of sociology."

He was stupefied to hear such a phrase from such lips. In what hardy, what barbarous atmosphere were young girls, then, educated in that strange country from which she came!

But he did not misunderstand her, as some men of his race and class would have done. Her face

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had for him the freshness of uncut flowers, the same virginity, the same unused look. It was even presumable that up to this moment no man had been permitted to kiss her.

Anne met his eyes, and for the first time she was afraid of Gino Curatulo. She felt the touch of something not to be played with, and she knew that she had been playing. Curatulo knew it also ; but he did not intend that she should play always. When he spoke again he did so quietly, and she divined a certain tender chivalry in his instant withdrawal of an expressiveness that had alarmed her.

They had come to the angle of the villa gardens from which a modern and uninteresting road leads to the Pincian Hill, and here Mrs. Garrison's automobile was waiting for her by appointment.

"Is it permitted that I walk with you here again often?" asked Curatulo.

Anne had recovered her self-possession. She considered him a moment or two with her muff against her lips, then she asked a counter question : —

"Do you always tell the truth?"

He seemed on the point of giving a mechanical and vigorous assent, but hesitated, smiled, and told it.

"Not always."

"Will you tell the truth now?"

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“It depends.”

“Can a girl walk with a man in the gardens of Rome more than once and not be unpleasantly talked of?”

“I am afraid — not,” he answered.

“Then, Signor Curatulo, why do you ask this thing of me?”

His eyes were eloquent, but he answered nothing.

“We will not walk in the gardens again,” she said.

“As you will,” he answered gravely.

She stepped into the car, and he lifted his hat, holding it in his hand as she drove by.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND OF THE COSMOPOLITE

TO Anne the first few weeks of this Roman winter moved almost breathlessly. She was entering a social world more full of color and event than any she had ever known, and for the moment it absorbed her attention more than the city itself. It was also a world which she was conscious of charming easily ; and whether in the salons of the Whites, where she met a liberal, spirited, and intelligent company, the men and women who are forming the national life of modern Italy, or in the ancient and more sombre palaces of the Blacks, where scholarly and subtle prelates showed her their ability to pay charming compliments, and gentle mannered, high-bred women of the old *régime* received her with delicate reserve, the girl felt herself happily, easily at home. She met a great number of ideas, and an equal eagerness to impart them. Conversational ardor was something for which social life in her own country had not prepared her, but among the Latins and most of those people who for reasons temperamental or otherwise have elected to live

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among Latins, she found it to a degree that amazed and delighted her.

“People are more interested in each other here than they are at home,” Anne admitted to Lady Fitz-Smith; “and there is such a great variety of people to be interested in.”

“It is probably true,” said the Englishwoman, “but Roman society is fairly ‘*dégringolé*’ these days. It does not talk so well or dress so well or eat so well as Paris, it lacks the intellect and power of London, it has no solidarity whatever; the Americans have spoiled that. But famous men and women pass through it now and again, and a small part of it is what all society should be: the recreation of the worker, instead of the work of the idle, which is, I believe, the case in America. Your scholars now, your professionals, your men and women of power and culture — I understand that it is impossible to get them to pay a call, and difficult to persuade them even to dine.”

“They are too busy,” said Anne.

“How very odd!” was Lady Fitz-Smith’s comment. “You must come to London, my dear. Why don’t you marry there and make your home there? It would suit you better than America.”

“I love America. I would never marry out of it.”

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“Tut! tut! my dear! You Americans are so sensitive to criticism. I hope you won’t marry a Latin, whatever you do; and be careful also how you flirt with them. When they are hurt they strike. I say this because I hear you have walked in the Borghese Gardens alone with Gino Curatulo, and he is not one to be played with. Indeed, if it came to that, I think it would be safer to marry him than to play with him. There are two classes of Latin husbands. One of them marries to have a family and his wife is just the one woman in the world he would never dream of being in love with. To the other, his wife is the centre of the universe, and he will be nothing else but the centre of hers. If she walks out in the morning, he walks with her; if she is ill, he does not leave the house, and despairs, which is charming of him; if she buys a new dress, he must choose it with her, which would be a bore besides an inconvenience; if she talks to another man twice the same evening, he thinks she is allowing him to make love to her, and is jealous. It becomes a question,” Lady Fitz-Smith chuckled, “it becomes a question which of the two husbands is to be preferred; but there is n’t, I think, any question of which kind Gino Curatulo would make. Now I must go to my ‘bridge’; but remember, my dear, don’t flirt with him.” And the

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Englishwoman went off on the arm of the Spanish Ambassador.

In the distance Anne could see Gino Curatulo, who had just come in, and been taken possession of by a woman who seemed determined not to let him go. He was facing Anne and looking at her so persistently that she felt sure of his seeking her as soon as it was decently possible for him to do so. She had no intention of giving up seeing him as much as she chose, even if by doing so she should cause him to fall in love with her, for she could not bring herself to regard the love of an Italian as a matter that would injure him seriously, and in spite of her friend's warning she did not see how it could injure her.

A distinguished Russian occupied her attention while she waited for Gino. The stranger was a brilliant talker who had traveled much, and penetrated to little known and uncomfortable regions in search of worshipers and shrines of strange gods. He was especially attached to the Sun-God, who had his devotees to this day, as he explained to Anne, and always would have, so long as there was light and life — which were the same things — on this planet. The Russian talked fluently and eagerly, and the girl was a sympathetic listener. She did not wonder at his enthusiasm for the Sun-God,

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though it passed through her mind that at home such enthusiasm would have seemed a petty thing when there were such problems as the "living wage" and the high cost of living to grapple with. He told her of traces of sun-worship he was discovering in the museums of Rome, and of statues hitherto misnamed and misunderstood which he could prove to have been taken from the temples of his favorite heathen worship. He could show them to her if she wished; he would consider it a pleasure, an honor, a deep interest to do so. From the heathen god he was led to speak of his own, the God of the Universe, and he explained that he could not conceive of Him as other than the Three in One, the point of the triangle. It was not until he had studied geometry that he had been able to reach the understanding of a geometric God, and he found in the conception a highly satisfactory reconciliation of orthodoxy with exact science.

"God — the point of a triangle! A geometric God!" repeated the American girl, amazed.

"How else would you define Him, mademoiselle?"

"I cannot define Him at all," she said. "If I could, I should not be able to feel that He was so much greater than myself."

At this moment Curatulo joined her, and after

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a few perfunctory words he led her away to supper. For the first time she thought his expression an unpleasant one, and wondered what had happened to transform him so.

"It is fortunate that I am not jealous," he said, without looking at her, as they walked through the crowded rooms.

"Jealous?" she repeated, in some bewilderment.

"Yes, or I should n't have liked the way that Russian talked to you."

Anne was amused. "He was telling me that he conceives of God as the point of a triangle," she said.

"He did n't look as though he was talking of God," answered Curatulo, with a smile that was unpleasantly dry.

"He conceives of God geometrically," continued the girl.

"He did not look as though he were talking of geometry."

"What did he look as if he were talking of?"

"What does a man usually talk of to a girl with whom he is evidently so much charmed that all the room can see it?"

"Let us hope that he was as much charmed as he looked," said Anne gayly.

But Curatulo was not gay.

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"It is indeed fortunate that I am not a jealous man," he repeated.

She saw that he was actually jealous, which diverted her more than the Russian traveler's idea of God. Never in her own social world could she have found two such picturesque episodes in one evening. Had Gino been an American she would have amused herself with teasing him further ; but some instinct warned her not to do so, and here she was right, for jealousy, which often draws and holds the Northern man, is equally likely to repel and ultimately drive away the Latin.

Gino inquired with gloomy punctiliousness what she would have for supper ; but when he brought it to her he found so much sweetness and humor in her candid eyes, and so evident a request to be friends again, that his ill-temper vanished.

On this evening, however, fate was unfriendly to his desire to be with her alone, and they were immediately interrupted by an Englishman who had been at a dinner-party with Anne the day before. He was a writer of extravagantly romantic fiction, being himself a stout and middle-aged person, of the kind whom one would imagine to be sitting constantly in armchairs. He asked Anne how she was enjoying the sights of Rome, and she told him tranquilly that she did not enjoy them. She cared more for Florence.

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"Too many churches here, eh?" he asked, with the indulgent twinkle in his eyes of one who is glad to be amused and friendly with the very young.

"I have only seen two," answered Anne, who understood the twinkle perfectly. "I saw St. Peter's and the Gesù, and I do not think I shall visit any more."

"You do not like St. Peter's?"

Anne answered calmly that she thought it *nouveau riche*, and the Englishman fixed a monocle in his eye and stared at the American girl.

"St. Peter's *nouveau riche*!" he repeated, as though stupefied.

"We should call it so in America," said Anne with apparent carelessness, though she was fully aware of the effect the words must produce.

"In America — but, my dear young lady! —"

"They tell me that the Gesù is the largest of the little churches," she continued, "so I went there next. It is a gorgeous and ugly place, and so I did n't see any more."

"Perhaps you have also seen and disapproved of the Sistine Chapel?" suggested the Englishman.

"I could not enjoy that terrible battle of arms and legs and torsos which is called the Last Judgment, and I think the color of it is the ugliest color in the whole world," she answered; and then,

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turning to Gino, she added: "I feel as though I must apologize to Signor Curatulo for abusing the city."

But he shrugged his shoulders. "You may say what you like," he said, "though I could tell you something better than what you say."

The Englishman turned a vacant stare upon the Italian. It was also a brief stare, for though he did not intend to be rude, it was obviously not worth while to be aware for any length of time of so very foreign a person, who wore a colored stone instead of a pearl or gold stud in his shirt front, and more vests than was compatible with the British idea of simplicity or manhood.

Gino fixed a monocle firmly in his eye and looked at the Englishman haughtily; but Anne felt that the Anglo-Saxon's sublime unconsciousness of either giving or taking offense gave him an advantage over her friend which she resented.

She did not speak of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or the impression of splendor and overwhelming majesty which she had received from it, because it amused her to startle the writer of romance. He was sitting now with his hands on his knees, looking at a spot above her head and chuckling in a kindly way to himself.

"St. Peter's *nouveau riche*!" he murmured. "It

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is astounding, and the astounding part of it, my dear young lady, the astounding part of it, is that it is true."

Anne laughed suddenly. "Ah, Sir Arthur, Sir Arthur!" she cried.

"But you are so young," he continued, "and coming from a country which is certainly considered to be new, and — er — rich."

"I know," she said, "but we are being educated quite nicely. You old nations are educating us. Every year we buy your precious manuscripts, your pictures, your mantelpieces, parts even of your palaces, and there doesn't seem any way for you to stop us."

The Englishman was conscious through his rather thick skin that he had been hit, and he looked at the young girl with something of bewilderment at finding her so fair and fragile; but he was a kindly gentleman with the English instinct for fair play, and the girl was very fair and sweet to look upon, so he only shook his head at her with friendly reproach.

"The retort is just," he said, "but you are a very formidable young person, very formidable indeed, and I see that it is not such as I, but a younger generation that must do battle with you."

He made a bow and left her.

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"How rude he was," commented Anne, "and how *nice*! It is the same with Lady Fitz-Smith. Americans cannot be as rude as that and still be nice. I am beginning to understand now," she cried, eager in her pursuit of national classifications. "Roughly speaking, the English one meets traveling are rude. The Americans are common. I think," she added regretfully, "that I would rather be rude."

"You think too much of international differences," said Curatulo; "I wish you would think rather of the things which are alike. I wish you would think that a man is a man, and a woman a woman, never mind what side of an ocean they come from. And there is another thing — why must we always meet in salons where there are people about — annoying people who interrupt? You have reproached me with being frivolous, but is it not rather you who are frivolous? What do you see of Rome?" He began to speak rapidly, bending toward her with his elbows on his knees and his firm brown hands clasped between. "What do you know of its grave and spacious charm, which is so much deeper a thing than the decorative loveliness of Florence. Let me be your guide. You will find me a good one. I will show you some of the greatest statues in the world. I will show you a Greek

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vase three thousand years old and so beautiful that one could say one's prayers before it. Or I will show you bits of stucco, fine and chaste as frost, and more lovely, — or we will go to visit a palace built by Michael Angelo, which has a grave beauty that rests one like quiet music."

His voice, warm and vibrating, was in itself a definite wooing, and the room and the people in it did not exist for her while she listened to this man of another race, — a race more vivid, expressive, and eloquent than her own. She felt the man was calling her, not to see vases and statues, but to partake, with him, of the raptures and mysteries of life.

There was a slight pause; then, "Will you let me be your guide?" he asked.

Anne hesitated, thinking what this might mean, and while she sought to think clearly she was disturbingly conscious of the vitality and charm of the Italian as he bent his dark head and waited for her answer. She gave it almost involuntarily: —

"I should like to see Rome in that way — with you. Of course, I will let you show it to me."

Curatulo did not lift his head at once.

"When can we start?" he asked.

"You know," she said, "that we cannot go alone."

He looked at her with quick reproach.

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"Surely you did not expect that," she added.

"I hoped."

"But I told you only a few days ago in the Borghese Garden —"

"That was, as you say, a few days ago. Things can change —"

"But this has not changed."

He leaned back in his chair and surveyed her with some bitterness.

"It was not my plan to go with you — and others," he said. "I ask you to reconsider your decision."

Anne laughed. "Signor Curatulo," she said, "you are a very tyrannical person."

"That may be," he answered. "It is certain that I want what I want."

"I see my aunt coming this way, and I imagine that she is going to take me home," continued Anne. "Shall I ask her when she can find a day for us all three to begin to see Rome?"

"It becomes a question, then, whether I would rather go with you and a chaperone or not at all."

She assented. "Why should it annoy you?" she asked. "You are an Italian, who are never permitted to see the girls of your own race alone."

"You forget that I have been in England. So I know what is expected — and not expected!" His

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sudden and delightful smile broke the gloom of his face. "I know what is not expected, and I will be very good," he said. "You can trust me."

"You have a way of making it hard to refuse you what you want," she answered.

"That is as it should be," he said eagerly, bending closer to her; "please, ah please, signorina, do not, in this case, what you find it hard to do. You will find me so grateful and so good and restrained that a puritan parson born in a cold climate could not be more so."

Anne blushed and laughed. This childlike eagerness combined with a very masculine determination, was unknown in the girl's experience, and the childlikeness held a powerful charm for her because it was combined with such a vital manhood. She felt that to see anything in his company, whether it was a Grecian vase or St. Peter's itself, would be a delight to her; but she made an effort and continued to deny him.

"It is not that I do not trust you," she said, "and it is not that I do not want to go, but I am not willing that the kind of thing should be said of me that would be said if I went with you alone as you ask me to do."

She rose hastily and advanced to meet her aunt.

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"I am dreadfully sleepy," said Margaret, "so I hope you are ready to go. It has seemed to me a dull evening."

"Dull!" Anne could have laughed aloud.

Curatulo had followed the girl, and without looking at her he addressed Mrs. Garrison.

"Miss Warren has been good enough to say that you might find me useful as a guide to Rome," he said. "Please consider me at your service for almost any day and hour you may wish. I can recommend myself as knowing almost anything the *custode* could tell you, and I have the added advantage of not costing a cent."

Anne sent Curatulo an approving and delighted smile.

"Could we not go somewhere next Thursday, early in the afternoon?" she said, wishing to make his capitulation easy; and Thursday was arranged as a convenient day for all of them. They took leave of their hostess together, and he walked by Anne to that part of the large ante-chamber where an unnecessary number of maids and flunkies were waiting to hand them their wraps.

"I have yielded," he said, "and I hope you enjoy your victory. Do not imagine, however, that all the victories are to be yours."

The moment Margaret found herself closed in the

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automobile with Anne, she turned to her with some excitement.

"Anne," she cried, "from the moment that I gave him permission to take us to the Diocletian next Thursday, until the door of the car shut him out, Curatulo never saw me. He never saw me in spite of his excellent European manners, and I am not small. It seemed as if he hardly knew where to put his feet, he was so occupied with you. Why have n't you told me this?"

"Aunt Margaret! Did n't you see, long ago?"

"Long ago!"

"Since that first afternoon he called."

"And you knew it then?"

"Yes," said the girl in a small voice.

Her aunt was silent for a while. "I must think what I ought to do about it."

"Why should you do anything?"

"Will you promise me not to like him?"

"No, indeed, I will not, for I like him very much already. I like his brown hair and skin, and his brown small hands. And though he is small, I am sure he is also strong, and his shoulders are as broad as Jack's. Sometimes he is eager and irrational as a child, and I like that, too, because he is always a man. So you see it is too late to promise not to like him. But you know that I do not love easily, and

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the Latin man has always seemed a being belonging not merely to another hemisphere, but another world. Moreover, he has not yet spoken to me of love."

"In this country it would be exceedingly improper to speak to you before coming to me."

"Nevertheless, if he speaks I think it will be to me, and not to you," said Anne thoughtfully.

CHAPTER V

INCENSE

MRS. GARRISON took her sight-seeing seriously. With a guide-book in her hand and frequent references to catalogues, she garnered facts with thoroughness and enthusiasm. Executive as she was in organizing her perfectly running household, she was no less so in classifying schools of art, and possessing herself of a clarifying knowledge of dates. She could have repeated all the arguments concerning the original inspiration of *Lo Sposalia*, and knew how and when Romans changed the form of Ionic capitals ; but if you had asked her which pleased her most, it would have puzzled her to tell you.

In his capacity of guide she found Curatulo disappointing. His knowledge had evidently been acquired by erratic impulse, and was not nearly so much to be relied upon as that of the *custode* ; but he cared very much for certain things and expressed himself about them in a way which pleased and interested Anne more than her aunt's accurate information.

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“I love Rome as few of those who are Romans love her,” he said, while taking tea with them in the crimson salon after their first expedition. “Her greatest lovers — and she has had so many that she may be called the supreme *courtisane* of cities — have been those from other countries and other races. And of the great men, the statesmen, the rulers, the artists, who have made her glorious, few were born under her walls. They came from distant lands and gave her their best, willing to find in her their fame or their disgrace. What has she in herself that she should draw men so? Has she a great harbor or a great river that she should have been chosen as the capital of the most powerful empire that the world has known? They will tell you that she had fine salt marshes, and that these were of vast importance to her people. But cities have possessed salt marshes without being great, as they have been great without salt marshes. Her first empire fell, and another rose in its place, — an empire of God, and those who call themselves vicars of Christ chose her as the capital from which they would rule the Christian world. In our own age Italian patriots bled and died that she and none other should be capital of the new nation which is now lifting her head among the others of Europe. What had she that empires old and new, empires of

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heaven and of earth, should build themselves between her walls? That she is now a museum of art and history is not wonderful when one thinks of the history that was made here, and that the greatest artists of the ages have come here to decorate her, to make her beautiful. But if Mrs. Garrison will read her histories of art she will find that not one of these artists save Montegna, who cannot be called very great, was a Roman. And of all the great men who have made her fortunes their own, few were born here. She has been supreme; but she has been barren. Not with her own sons has she ruled and become splendid, but by her strange power of drawing the sons of other lands to give their lives in her service; and here lies her fascinating mystery."

It was not difficult for the imagination of Anne to become possessed by the mystery and beauty, the ugliness and squalor that is Rome; and it soon became for her, not a place to see, but an experience that worked upon her nature, a quickener to new and vital feelings, which is what Rome has always been to those who have loved her most.

Superficially concealed by modern and commonplace streets, a confusing network of electric-car lines, and a number of large and offensively new hotels, the old Rome still remains, and her immense

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collection of art treasures garnered from all centuries and all nations, the desolate poetry of her ruins, and the majesty of her history, became something in the girl's consciousness which no after years could efface. What she did not realize was the extent to which these things were becoming identified with the man who was making them live for her.

The first expedition with Gino Curatulo was followed by a second and a third, with Mrs. Garrison always in attendance.

"Is it to be always like this?" he asked.

"What would you wish it to be?" answered Anne, in the small voice she used when guilty of pretense.

"You know very well what I wish," he answered; and she was silent, for it was futile to pretend that she did not.

They were just entering St. Peter's, where they had been somewhat unwillingly conducted by Margaret, who wished to hear a mass in one of the chapels.

"They say a regiment of soldiers was camped here once without any one knowing it," she said. "I should hardly think it was as large as that."

"It seems large to me," Anne said wearily, gazing down the vast nave that stretched before them. Groups of people were dotted here and there,

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and seemed to be moving slowly, futilely, over the marbles, as upon some very distant stage, or the floor of some strange world, so large that it dwarfed all men who found themselves within it.

Looking through the entire length of the nave to the dome which hung spacious as an infinite thing, mystical with faint blue incense where the sunlight poured into it, the eye rested upon the *baldichino*, a mighty, far-off presence, and the spirit received the only baptism of emotion which this temple of Christendom can give it.

Immediately around them the light was bright, hard, almost shadowless, and the marbles of wall and arches were bright also, and many-colored, which displeased the girl, and seemed, as they have seemed to many others, definitely irreligious.

"They say those angels holding the fonts are seven feet high," said Mrs. Garrison. "I think that must be a mistake."

Curatulo, who walked by the other side of Anne, followed the direction of her eyes.

"You like it?" he asked, pointing onward to the space under the dome.

"It is the one thing here that pleases me."

"I think I must measure those angels some day," said her aunt.

"All that you say, all that you feel, all that you

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think, delights me," continued the voice of Curatulo; "never have I known a companion who perceived so exquisitely."

"Is n't it shameful to see those poor, ignorant people encouraged to kiss the toe of that brazen image?" said Mrs. Garrison, as they came upon the statue passed off upon the "faithful" as that of St. Peter.

A peasant knelt on the cold stone beneath the image, his hat pressed to his chest, his eyes, expressionless and hypnotized, fixed upon the lifted bronze hand. A woman and child came by, wiped the foot that has been many times kissed away, put their lips to it, crossed themselves, and passed on.

"What does it mean to them?" asked Anne wonderingly.

"If they kiss it a certain number of days, they win a certain number of years from Purgatory," explained Curatulo.

"Did you see them wipe the foot before kissing it?" asked Mrs. Garrison dryly. "It seems odd that a foot which can have power to take you out of Purgatory can't protect you from germs. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Curatulo, you may be yourself a Catholic."

"I am," he answered carelessly, "but do not let that disturb you. I do not believe any of it."

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“ You do not believe any of it, and you call yourself a Catholic ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Garrison.

Both women were amazed by a position especially common to the Catholics of Italy, but by no means limited to them. Catholicism retains sufficient control over modern Roman life to make it important for Italians who would serve their city in any capacity to avow an outward allegiance to the Vatican.

“ Is there, then, a difference between not believing a religion and not belonging to it ? ” asked Anne, turning her clear eyes upon Curatulo.

He was unaccustomed to logic or definite thought in woman, and it surprised him especially in one so young, so fragilely slender, so manifestly created to be loved by man.

“ What does it matter ? ” he said. “ The subject does not interest me. Am I never to speak to you without whispering, because of some one who walks on the other side ? ”

She did not answer him at once, and before she could do so her aunt noticed a strange chanting that echoed persistently through the vast aisles, and declared it to be the performance of a mass she had come to hear.

Anne, whose school-days were not long passed, thought that the voices of the very old men who

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gossiped on the walls of Troy while the battle raged below must have sounded with much of the same dry and pitiful futility, and she shared her fancy with Curatulo, who said bluntly that he knew nothing of what happened on the walls of Troy — it was another of the subjects that did not interest him.

They came to a chapel where the mass was being said, and stood among the crowd of those who stood and knelt outside the stone balustrade. Within the chapel sat the officiating priests, some of them with strong hard faces, some with weak sensual ones, and all of them looking bored. From their midst, as they dozed, or took snuff, or yawned behind their hands, came a mechanical chanting, a dry sound which seemed to proceed almost automatically. Anne wondered at such a spectacle, as existing presumably for the two-fold purpose of glorifying God and lifting the spirit of man towards Him, and again she wished to share her impression with the man beside her; but he had neither thoughts nor words for anything but her relation to himself. His voice came to her through the chanting:—

“I tell you that you have an exquisite charm for me, and your reply is to argue with me upon a religious position. I ask you when I may see

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you, you talk to me of old men on the walls of Troy. Are all Americans like you? What do such things mean except that you do not like me?"

The thin cracked voices of the priests continued from the chapel, and a cloud of incense rose from the swinging censers; but these things were becoming to the girl a little dreamlike, for there was genuine pain in the words of Curatulo.

Her aunt had moved away, pressing closer to the railing in order to see a mosaic over the altar.

"You know," said Anne, "that I like you."

She spoke with her profile toward him, but she felt that he looked at her, and without seeing, she felt the eagerness of that look.

"Then do something to please me. Let us be sometimes alone together. Let us visit the wonders of this city with no one by who talks of dates and the height of angels. And when we are tired of the city, let us go out to the *Campagna Romana*, which I will teach you to love as I love, for it is so beautiful and sorrowful and no other city in the world has such a setting. When we have driven out there, we will leave our carriage and walk over the fields to a little grove where the ilex trees stand closely together because the great plains about them are so bare; or we will go farther yet, to where the aqueducts have been standing for

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thousands of years. And we will stand by them together and look over the plains where there are no shadows, to the mountains, and you will feel an impression of something mysterious and immense. Perhaps even the tears will come to your eyes with a nostalgia for you know not what. Will you come?"

She was aware that the people were kneeling about them, and as a bell rang the host was raised. The priests had ceased their chant and the incense rose in silence, but all this was more and more like a dream to her.

There was heat and emotion in his words, and Anne was moved by them as by the lyrical passion of drama, or music, or poetry. They awakened response in the regions of her mind and spirit, and gave the man who spoke them a power over her which no charm of person or temperament could have won him.

"Will you come?" he pleaded. "Ah, if I could stand with you once on those plains and look with you to those mountains, I could teach you something, something you do not know, and which is so precious that for the sake of it you would take all the rest of life and tie it into a pocket-handkerchief and toss it into the sea!"

Something seemed to be coming to Anne from



WILL YOU COME ?

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over the borderland of her experience, something very strong and strange. Yet she found the power to deny him.

"I cannot go with you," she said. "You must know that I cannot."

"How should I know such a thing?" And he asked her again, urging her with a strength and eloquence that vibrated along the nerves of her spirit; but she knew what going alone with him to the Roman Campagna would mean: Gino Curatulo would never submit to the constraint a Northern man under the same circumstances would put upon himself; so she continued to deny him, and suddenly he was silent, neither asking her again nor speaking at all. She did not know how deeply he was hurt until she saw that there were tears in his dark and rather heavy eyes; and, partly because she was very tender-hearted, partly because he had moved her more vitally than he himself guessed, she was near to crying herself as they turned and, joined by Margaret, walked through the long nave to the door.

When they came out upon the stone terraces of steps that lead down to the immense piazza with its curved enclosing wings of colonnades, it was just after sunset and very cold. A *tramontana* blew from over the mountains, bending the waters of the

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twin fountains and scattering them till the pavement was wet for many yards.

Curatulo, who had been carrying Anne's coat, now held it up for her to put on.

"You are teaching me — patience," he said so low that Margaret could not hear. "It is a virtue I never thought to learn."

He refused Mrs. Garrison's invitation to go back with them and have tea, but lingered by the closed door of the limousine, hat in hand, with his brown fingers on the window-sill.

"When do I see you again?" he asked of Anne. She had expected anger from him, and it was evident that he had none, though he bore his disappointment gravely.

"It is so cold," said Anne, "and you have no overcoat. Please come back with us."

He shook his head. "It is better not," he answered, his eyes telling her that for the moment he could not trust himself with her.

"When do I see you again?" he repeated.

"We go to the British Embassy to-night."

"What time shall you be there?"

The girl turned to her aunt.

"What time do you think?" she asked.

"How can I tell at this hour?" answered the older woman, with an unusual restraint in her as-

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pect. "If we all go, we shall doubtless all meet there sooner or later." And she turned to wave away a beggar, whose prayers she would have considered it almost wicked to gratify.

"I think it will be about half-past ten," said Anne to Curatulo.

"Thank you," he murmured, holding out his hand; and when she put hers into it he kissed her fingers quickly, and was gone.

Anne drew back into the shadow as her car started rapidly homewards. The ceremony at St. Peter's had passed before her as a thing in a dream, and as in a dream Rome slid by the car window. Narrow and disheveled streets that surround the Castel St. Angelo, a stark, gaunt pile of masonry that reared itself black against a pallid sky, the crossing of the bridge where Bernini's angels pose in wind-blown attitudes over the Tiber's faded waters, the plunge again into more and darker streets, and the confused and precarious threading of their way among a squalid and excitable crowd of people toward the final ascent in quietness as they drove under the trees through the avenue to the *portone* of their own palace, were all things seen as in a dream, but a dream in which impressions are mysteriously significant, pregnant as though with unexplained meaning and event.

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Anne leaned her hot cheek against the window-pane, and the passing of the dreamlike things and the sense of the man who moved somewhere among them and sought her love, possessed her consciousness.

CHAPTER VI

AFTERMATH

ANNE had tea alone with her aunt that afternoon, among the crimson splendors of the large salon ; and the girl took hers in silence, unaware of the fullness of expression on her face till she found Margaret's usually calm and self-sufficing eyes fixed upon her with anxious penetration.

"Anne," said the older woman, "there is something about this that I do not like."

Anne's look of helpless self-consciousness was like a confession, but she answered nothing.

"I know you to be one of the women who like to have men in love with them —"

"You are one of the few — the very few — who never did like it," interrupted Anne, snatching the first chance of recovering her mental poise.

Her aunt ignored the interruption. "To have men in love with you seems to gratify some requirement of your nature," she continued. "I do not think it altogether vanity, but I confess to neither understanding nor admiring it. However, recognizing it as I do, I have never felt alarmed when you

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were seeing too much of some man who would be undesirable as a husband ; but there is something about this which, as I said before, I do not like."

"I am sorry," said Anne quietly, putting down her tea-cup. "Do you not like Signor Curatulo?"

The girl was evidently vibrating with excitement, but the expression of her sensitive face was closed and slightly obstinate. In Margaret was apparent only a blunt and affectionate determination to do her duty, as she painfully but very clearly saw it.

"He is an agreeable and charming man ; but as a husband I distrust him profoundly," she said.

"Why?"

"You know without my saying it that there is not a man or woman among your friends at home who would not so distrust him."

"That is true," said Anne. "They would call him 'Dago' and speak of organ-grinders and fortune-hunters, and hate him very much. I know that perfectly because I know that nowhere are there people more unc cosmopolitan, more insular, more sincerely unable to imagine any good in a foreigner, than my own people."

"We will not discuss this," said Mrs. Garrison.

"What, then, shall we discuss?" asked Anne,

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who felt no longer dreamlike. Leaning back in the deep red arm-chair, she looked down at her hands and began to slip a ring on and off her finger; the expression of her face remained guarded and remote.

"Anne," said her aunt, "you are making it hard for me."

There was a slight pause, and then Anne said without lifting her eyes, "The situation itself is hard. You fear that I am falling in love with a man who could not make me happy, and you want to know if your fear is correct. It is not. I do not love Signor Curatulo."

But Margaret was not reassured. "You may not love him to-day; but you may to-morrow."

"What woman can answer for to-morrow?" she said, with a lightness that her aunt knew to be assumed.

"Have you thought that he may believe you to have money?" she asked bluntly.

Anne dropped her hands in her lap, and looked gravely at her aunt.

"I do not believe Gino Curatulo cares for me because of any money he thinks I may have."

"I shall tell him how very little you have," said Margaret. "I shall tell him to-night." She rose, evidently relieved by the resolution, and stood look-

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ing into the fire with her foot on the grate. "And I think I shall also write to your father," she added.

"Papa would not object. He does not believe that he belongs to a chosen people."

Margaret Garrison stood for some time without speaking, her large and substantial figure looming black against the firelight as though in ominous protest against the untried; and Anne received an odd impression that on the other side of Margaret, and with the firelight, were the safe, trusted things of her home, the comfort and security of its well-defined ideals against a historical background that was shallow, but of transparent clarity; and that behind Margaret, with herself, in the spacious gloom of a Roman room, were the unknown things, the uncertain ideals, a life she believed to be disorderly under all its rigidity of etiquette; but a mystery and twilight with a flame at its heart.

"I cannot tell you why I feel so," said Margaret, speaking from her world of the tried and the secure, "but I believe that for you to love and be loved by Gino Curatulo would be the greatest misfortune that could happen to you."

"It might be so," said Anne slowly.

"Promise me then, that if you find yourself in danger of loving him, you will run away."

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“I shall not run away from any love that may come,” answered the girl, in the same tone.

Margaret remained looking into the fire, oppressed by a startled sense of helplessness. In the light fine quality of her niece's voice she had heard a strong note of deliberation, a tense but resolute choice of danger, and the older woman wondered if the power of her own years and wifehood had any power to help this child. How far she had ever influenced her, beyond the practical happening of life, she had never been sure, and now she perceived suddenly that beyond such things she had never influenced her at all.

Margaret had never conceived it possible that there might be lands “East of the sun and West of the moon”; but to understand Anne one must find such lands, and they were far — too far from happy Margaret's own well-lighted world; her kindly but heavy feet could never climb their unsubstantial stairways.

She turned suddenly and took Anne's pale face between her hands. “Child! Child!” she said, “I am afraid for you.”

Anne did not lift her eyes, and the expression of her face remained closed and remote. It was evident that she submitted herself unwillingly to the enfolding hands, and Margaret released her.

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The girl turned, taking her hat and gloves from the table, and moved slowly, as though in hesitation, toward the door. Through an intense preoccupation it hurt her to know that lack of response was hurting her aunt, and once she paused, fingering the corner of the table by which she stood. She wanted to speak, but she could not. The minute passed and she went out of the room in silence.

That evening at the embassy Mrs. Garrison sought to do her duty.

"My niece is enjoying Rome," she told Curatulo, as the two stood watching Anne across the room. "But I hope she will not enjoy it too much, for she cannot stay here after this winter."

A sudden look of watchfulness came into the Italian's eyes, but was instantly repressed.

"And why, madame, can she not stay here?" he asked, turning to her squarely.

"There is no one but myself for her to stay with, and I must be at home."

"There are other conceivable ways of staying in Rome," answered Curatulo.

"You mean that she might marry here?" Margaret sought to dissimulate her definite purpose under lightness of word; but dissimulation of any

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kind was almost impossible to her, and the Italian wondered at the transparency of her effort.

"Such things are always possible," he replied.

"Hardly in this case, for she has no *dot*. About three thousand a year in her own right, and nothing or little more to come on her father's death is not enough to be married for."

"It might be enough to be married *on* — in this country," answered Curatulo, with an unchanged smile. "Madame makes the mistake of thinking that all Europeans marry for money, because — pardon me — those who do are almost the only kind her charming compatriots marry."

"They seem to be the only kind who want to marry us," answered Margaret shrewdly.

"But I could show you so many exceptions," said Curatulo. "I could show you marriages of Italians and English, Italians and Americans, where the happiness is still perfect after twenty years. One does not read of those in the papers. 'Happy nations have no history.' Believe me, madame, that Anglo-Saxon misunderstanding of Latins is one of the strangest things about that strange people. The Latins, the Italians certainly, make the most devoted of husbands."

"But not faithful ones," answered Margaret.

"I do not admit that," answered the Italian ;

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"and even when it is so, fidelity, in the sense that you mean it, is a relative thing."

"Relative to what, may I ask?"

"To a life-long and tender devotion to wife and children, a devotion in no way disturbed by a possible or rare infidelity, as you call it. Be just, madame, — perfect, are your own men perfect? And you must remember that you have divorce, and in this way legalize the expression of what is after all human nature."

"I think that you are saying dreadful things," was Margaret's comment.

Curatulo bowed and shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"I regret, madame, that they seem to you so," he said. "I cannot help thinking that you are not altogether just."

"But I am just beyond and above everything else," said Margaret, in her decided way; and in her decision, her almost helpless honesty, the rigidity, and what seemed to Curatulo the crudity, of her puritan vision, she stood for him as an incorruptible type of the sort of American woman who is not often met in the social world of Europe. Her dress, made of handsome materials, but a little rigid, a little unfashionable, emphasized her inflexibility and lack of sensuous charm.

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Just then Anne passed by on the arm of a very old man, an ancient and withered nobleman, perfectly groomed, perfumed, and dyed, who was paying her highly decorative compliments, as Curatulo could guess from his slightly precarious animation. Beside him the young girl looked startlingly young and fair, her pale soft hair, her throat, — a little too slender, — the fragility of her straight figure that moved so simply and freely, gave him the same impression of purity and truth that he received from Margaret Garrison. But where the aunt was uniform and unyielding, Anne had a thousand vibrations and colors. She possessed the grace of imagination, the charm of a fastidious and penetrating intelligence, and something he divined also of exquisite tenderness, of a fragrance of nature that intoxicated him while it kept him, mentally speaking, on his knees.

As she passed he turned his head to watch her, smiling a small unconscious smile that was very sweet. Mrs. Garrison saw it, and could not deny its charm, nor the suggestion it gave of the little, tender, cosy things of life, the purely affectionate things with which passion has nothing to do.

Turning to her again he asked leave to accompany her and her niece upon some expedition the following day, and showed himself uninfluenced by

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the statement of Anne's comparative poverty. Mrs. Garrison was surprised, but not so much so as she would have been had she not seen the unconscious absorption of that tender little smile with which he had watched Anne cross the room.

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CHAPTER VII

LADY FITZ-SMITH FOR THE DEFENSE

THERE was no lessening in the heat of Gino's wooing, though he knew she could not bring him a fortune. That evening, before leaving the embassy hall he had told her that he loved her, and during the next few days on their renewed expeditions as sightseers, he contrived to tell her so several times again, in spite of Mrs. Garrison's chaperonage. From day to day, almost from moment to moment he seemed to expect her to return his love, but he took her denials with fortitude, showing neither temper nor discouragement in the face of them.

Two days later her aunt called upon Lady Fitz-Smith with the intention of learning all there was to know about Gino Curatulo. She was fortunate enough to find the Dowager not only at home, but alone, and began her attack by criticism of the Italians.

"They are self-conscious," she said. "They strut, they twirl their mustaches before public mirrors, and if they are not exceptionally well-bred they

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boast, they tell stories about themselves to show how witty or how gay or how brave they have been."

"Every race is self-conscious," answered Lady Fitz-Smith, "and the Italian form of self-consciousness is not a deadly, blighting thing as ours is. It vivifies them, it is full of good-humor and picturesqueness. If an Italian says, 'See, I was brave, or witty, or strong!' he says it buoyantly. He is enthusiastic over the qualities themselves as well as his manifestation of them, and he will be even more enthusiastic over the same qualities as shown by a friend. Of course they have little or no prejudice in favor of telling the truth," she admitted in answer to a further criticism of Mrs. Garrison's, "and they have n't what we call moral force, but they have so much else, — so much more of warmth and sensibility of affection."

"They have too much sensibility," said Margaret. "They have a great deal of emotionalism about friends who were unhappy years ago, or brothers or mothers who died before they were born, — things about which no well-balanced person would have any vivid or active feeling; and one always knows that their feelings are superficial and mean nothing."

"They mean what they feel at the moment,"

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answered the Englishwoman; "and can we reasonably reproach them for feeling only temporarily on occasions where we would not feel at all?"

Mrs. Garrison was surprised to find such flexibility of view in one of the English race. Was it possible that the Dowager retained some tenderness for her husband's people, disastrous as had been the effect of that husband upon her life? Her defense of Italians was so unexpected as to seem almost perverse in Margaret's eyes, and without further delay she brought the conversation to Gino Curatulo.

"I suppose you are anxious about him because he wants to marry your very charming little niece," said the Dowager before Margaret had completed her first question; and the latter, with a sigh of relief, relapsed into frankness.

"He has not asked to marry her," she admitted, "but it seems to be coming to that."

"I have been expecting it." The Englishwoman looked down at the brown jacket she was knitting, and her needles worked rapidly. "He is so very much in love with her that he doesn't seem to be able to listen to me when she is in sight. — As for Curatulo, I can tell you as much about him as any one can. His family is of no importance, but he is probably all the better for that.

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The Italian nobility are appalling creatures, and if your niece thought of marrying any one, or almost any one of them, I should suggest that you take her at once to the other side of the world ; but a man like Curatulo has n't his blood vitiated by an ancestry of viciousness and self-indulgence. He is a gentleman, as any one can see, and has money enough to live on, provided he lives by himself. He is also intelligent, and an admirable lover, as more than one woman can testify. There is nothing definite said against him, and that is much in his favor — ”

“ But the Russian woman,” interrupted Margaret.

“ No one blames him for anything to do with that.”

“ Was she not a married woman ? ” asked Margaret, with some stiffness.

“ Yes, poor thing ! ” answered Lady Fitz-Smith, in her deep warm voice. “ If Gino had succeeded in running away with her he would have made her happy as a woman can be under the circumstances, and I don't think he would ever have deserted her. I believe in him to that extent, which is a good deal when one thinks what men are.”

Lady Fitz-Smith knitted smoothly while she said what Mrs. Garrison described afterwards as “ those terrible things.” It seemed incredible to her that

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any one so respected and beloved as the Dowager should speak of moral crimes with such lightness, and she began to fear that as an adviser in her present difficulty the Englishwoman was incompetent.

"I suppose you are afraid that Gino wants your niece's money," continued the Dowager. "I notice that you 'nice' Americans are always in dread of being married for money, and that you resent even property considerations in that connection."

"I should hope so," answered Margaret.

Lady Fitz-Smith counted a few stitches in silence before she said, "But is n't that a bit unworldly?"

"I hope so," said Margaret again.

The Englishwoman amended her question.

"Is n't it a bit unwise? There are nowhere more happy marriages than we have in England, and money is always a necessary consideration in the marriage contract. One is wrong to despise men who marry for money. There are instances where great family estates must be preserved from ruin, as much almost for the glory of England as for the family, and it becomes the highest duty, the greatest self-sacrifice, to marry where money can be found."

"What then becomes of love?"

"Love often comes after marriage, just as after

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marriages for love it often goes. When a marriage is really loveless and nature seeks other outlets, it is unfortunate, of course, — more unfortunate for us than for you, since you have such easy divorce.”

“We do not all condone divorce,” answered Mrs. Garrison. “I do not.”

“I am glad to hear it,” said Lady Fitz-Smith heartily.

“Yet — excuse me — you condone the crime which our country can legalize at least?”

“But, dear Mrs. Garrison! when have I said I condoned?” cried the Dowager. She dropped her knitting, emphasis rendering her voice more than usually heavy and impressive. “I do not condone. I regret, I deplore; but what can one do? The world is the world. If God can bear these things, and He evidently can, since He permits them, who am I that I should judge too severely. Forgive me if I say that you Americans, such of you at least as come from that part of the country first settled by the Puritans, seem a little — shall I say ‘anæmic,’ in your views upon these subjects?”

Margaret sat very straight in her handsome, somewhat austere costume. Her clear American speech, a little monotonous, a little thin and orderly beside the excitable accents of the Englishwoman, was equally expressive of resolution and dignity.

LADY FITZ-SMITH FOR THE DEFENSE

“Right is right, and wrong is wrong.”

“Exactly.” Lady Fitz-Smith nodded as she bent her head again over her knitting. “But isn’t it sometimes difficult to know which is which?”

“It ought not to be,” said Margaret firmly.

“No. But isn’t it?”

Mrs. Garrison was bewildered, not by what the Dowager said, because she was so clearly in the wrong, but because such things could be said by one who was evidently a “good” woman.

“Dear Mrs. Garrison,” continued the rich voice, “would you be so kind as to hold my wool while I roll another ball?”

Mrs. Garrison took off her gloves willingly to help the Englishwoman, while that lady explained why she was so anxious to finish the jacket, of which she had promised a dozen to one of her niece’s tenants who was to start a draper’s shop in the spring. It was certainly very kind of Lady Fitz-Smith to spend so much time knitting jackets in such a cause, — unnecessarily kind, the American woman thought, as the wool slipped over her firm white hands to be rolled into a ball by the Dowager. The two women spoke of charities, and Margaret again found cause for surprise in the warm and personal exercise of it which had developed so naturally through centuries of relationship between tenant

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and land-owner, and which was so different a thing from the complex and scientific system of the United States. She even asked herself if the English idea was not more human, more democratic, than our own. It was certain that few of the "gentry" in her own country would think of taking tea with a laborer's wife, and still less of standing up with the village people to dance on occasions of festival, or of opening a servants' ball with their own butler.

Many new ideas were forced under Mrs. Garrison's vision during these days, and except upon questions concerning the necessity for absolute truth and morality, as she understood the words, she was not incapable of revising her point of view. With these two reservations standing as beacon-lights in her consciousness, she asked at last her vital question : —

"Is Gino Curatulo what we would call a good man?"

The Dowager wound her wool rapidly for a few minutes of silence, with what seemed to Margaret an odd expression on her face. She could not guess that her question seemed rather funny to the old cosmopolitan.

"If by good I am to understand you mean what you call moral —" she said hesitatingly.

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"I do," answered Margaret with decision.

"Then I think he is about like other men." The Englishwoman was disposing of it easily. "They are more or less alike everywhere, you and I know who know the world —"

"We do not know the same world," interrupted Mrs. Garrison rather helplessly.

It was difficult for the Dowager to believe that any grown person could remain so obstinately innocent as Margaret Garrison; and the American woman did in fact belong to a type becoming more and more rare even in the centre of what had once been a Puritan stronghold. Lady Fitz-Smith wound her wool for a few moments in silence, while she sought the right word.

"He is as good as a great many other men who make excellent husbands and fathers," she said finally. "Speaking in a general way, the Italians are an instinctive rather than an ethical people. They do not think about 'being good' as we do; but this does not mean that they have not excellent qualities. If you think that Curatulo would not lie readily if it served his purpose, or that he is capable of — what shall I say? — high moral action for the sake of morality alone, you must be disappointed. It is very possible, however, that he has fidelity of affection, and he would not be an Italian

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if he had not powers of warmth and devotion. You must remember that when the Italian is any good at all he is the most domestic of creatures; and I have known appallingly wild young men settle down into lifelong devotion to their wives and families."

"When you say that he is probably incapable of high moral action for the sake of morality alone, for what, then, would he be capable of it?" persisted Mrs. Garrison.

"For the sake of some thing or person. Italians have shown themselves passionately self-sacrificing for their country, their mothers, and sometimes, though more rarely, for the women they have loved."

"Sometimes one must do right even when it might harm the person or the thing one loves," said Margaret.

"And for that kind of rightness, I imagine Curatulo would have no capacity at all. But those questions are difficult ones. I don't believe one race ever comes to understand another, and the more I live with them the more I know I don't understand them. If Miss Warren marries him, she will probably have a devoted husband, and certainly have a charming position in the kind of society she is evidently fitted to enjoy; for, as you know, he goes everywhere, and his mother's grandmother

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was a Colonna, who insisted upon marrying beneath her and was not received again by the family — but it gives this boy a certain claim among the best, or the worst, according to the way you look at it. When she first came here I advised her never to think of marrying an Italian; but I was thinking of her making one of those horrible ‘brilliant’ matches, as so many of her countrywomen have done.”

“All, or nearly all, that you have said confirms my feeling that a marriage with him would be a great misfortune,” said Margaret, as the last strand of wool slipped from her hands.

“I think it very possible,” answered the Dowager; and Margaret felt that for the present the subject was closed.

That afternoon she took Lady Fitz-Smith in her automobile to a reception, and while driving through the modern and little-known Corso Italia, an unattractive street which passes under the old Roman wall from the Porta Pinciana to the Porta Salaria, she saw Curatulo walking slowly with a young woman who was evidently a lady. The Dowager made a point of attracting his attention as they drove by, and waved her hand to him with what seemed to Mrs. Garrison unnecessary emphasis.

“Tell Miss Warren to ask him whom he was

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walking with," she said, with a malicious twinkle in her eyes, as Curatulo and his companion passed from view.

"Who was it?" asked Margaret.

"Ask him," retorted Lady Fitz-Smith gayly, and would say no more.

That evening Mrs. Garrison told Anne of the episode, and what the Englishwoman had said about it.

"It is a little thing, but I thought I ought to tell you," she added; "for it seemed strange that Curatulo should walk upon the Corso Italia, and what Lady Fitz-Smith said about it makes it seem stranger still."

"It is a little thing," said Anne, with some haughtiness, "and I shall certainly not condescend to question him upon such a subject."

CHAPTER VIII

DOUBT

BUT Anne's words were braver than herself. That night she sat on the edge of her great bed with an eiderdown wrapped about her, and unseeing eyes fixed upon the candle-flame. Only the salons had been supplied with electricity, and her vast, cold bedroom was engulfed with shadows.

How little she knew of her friend, or of this strange old world which had made him ! It seemed to spread about her into a mystery so profound that it became a menace. What did she know of its landmarks ? What assurance had she of its safety ? Another race of men dwelt there. Could she ever understand that race ?

At this point her clear young mind sought to put aside indefinite visions. What, after all, was troubling her ? There had been no sense of shadows or mystery that afternoon. A man who said that he loved her had walked under the old Roman wall of the Corso Italia with another woman. And why should he not so walk ? One may meet a woman anywhere by chance. Was she young ? And

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had she charm? Anne had not asked her aunt these questions, and she knew that pride would prevent her doing so on the morrow ; but pride seemed suddenly an intolerable shackle, for it was important that she should know if the woman had charm.

Lady Fitz-Smith had laughed when she saw them walking. Why had she laughed? One does not laugh for nothing ; and she had also made unpleasant insinuations of mystery. Why had he walked on the Corso Italia? It is not a pleasant walk, and is rather a dirty one, where not many people go unless to get somewhere else. Margaret had driven there because it was the shortest way to reach the reception ; but Curatulo had not been going to the reception. She remembered now a tone of reserve with which he had told her that he should not be there. Suddenly she blew out the light and crept between the sheets, but questions continued to file past one another in her brain.

Now she suspected Curatulo of an intrigue which would make him, considering his attitude towards herself, wholly contemptible ; and the suspicion was a torment. Striving to be fair, she asked herself whether the suspicion was justified by his action, or merely the result of that distrust of all foreigners to which she had been educated — a

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distrust too often justified by experience with the kind of stranger who visits her own land. But she felt that it would be impossible to see Curatulo as she had been seeing him unless she knew the truth about him. Was it possible that he did not love her? She heard again the tone of his voice when he told her so, when he plead with her for some privilege of solitude with him. There had been tears in his eyes more than once when she denied him; but he had not complained or grown angry as a man of petty vanity will do, or discouraged as a weak man would have been.

She saw again the small and very sweet smile which seemed only for her, and came while he looked at her at times when no words were passing between them; and the charm of the smile lingered in her consciousness as seemingly little things sometimes will. He loved her! The warm and thrilling sense of this love flowed back upon her as she lay in the darkness; and though she had told him that she did not love him, she could not tell him, or herself, that she never should. Her caring for him now meant more for her than the temperamental need of being loved which Margaret had deplored. It meant something different from anything that had yet come into her life; but she was conscious of racial differences which held her from him, and

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perhaps there had been more distrust of him than she had admitted to herself. It is easy for Anglo-Saxons to consider all Latins as false, or generally evil; and he was still a creature from another world whom she had listened to and watched: in spite of the intimacy between them, had she not always been listening and watching, half expecting some revelation of unworthiness?

He loved her sincerely, of this she now felt a deep certitude; but by this certitude was another: it was not by accident he had walked under the old Roman wall with another woman. He had walked slowly, and a friend who knew his past had laughed when she had seen him. It was the laughter of Lady Fitz-Smith, rather than the smile of the man who loved her, that finally persisted through the night's tormented sleep, and that often wrenched her back to consciousness at moments when she seemed escaping from it.

Mrs. Garrison began the next day with a violent headache that made her helpless. It was the only physical ailment to which she was subject, and Anne knew at once that she must go alone to the luncheon where Curatulo was to be. It seemed to her now almost impossible that she could speak to him or smile with him.

Distrust of her friends was new to her, and

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more hateful than she would have believed possible. There were moments when she saw the thing as an absurdity. Could Curatulo not be seen walking with a woman without being distrusted? It was because he belonged to the Latin race that she distrusted him so quickly; but was that fair? Was she showing herself any more broad-minded than Margaret herself. Nevertheless, distrust remained, and she was pale when she entered her hostess's room. She knew that Curatulo was already there, and almost immediately he came to her.

"What is it?" he asked quickly. "You are pale, you do not look yourself."

"My aunt is ill," she answered, "and I have been with her."

He had never looked better, more full of vigor and health, more vitally charming, more eager toward herself, and she felt as she had felt so often, the elemental attraction that merely his dark coloring had for her. At this moment the charm held something of peril, since her conscience could not justify it. They were standing near a Japanese azalea tree and she turned partly from him, putting up her hand to finger the white flowers.

"I must know! I must know! I cannot stand by him and not know whether or not I can trust him," she thought.

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"Mrs. Garrison's illness must be sudden," he was saying. "She was looking charmingly well yesterday afternoon. Why were you not with her?"

"With her?"

"Yesterday, in the carriage when she passed. Perhaps she did not see me. Lady Fitz-Smith was with her and laughed when she saw whom I was with, so I thought she must have pointed to me."

Anne still fingered the azalea blossom and did not look at Curatulo, but she felt as though life and warmth had forsaken her and were coming back.

"Why did Lady Fitz-Smith laugh?" The question came as though without her own volition.

"Because I was with a cousin whom I have known since we were children together, and every one supposed we loved each other,—not in a cousinly way,—which was a mistake; but there are some who still laugh. Let us talk no more of my cousin. Why do you turn away? I want you to see me, because I am looking very well in a new suit I bought to please you."

Anne still averted her face. She knew that it was alive with color and happiness, and did not wish him to see lest he understand. Finally she drew down a branch of the tree and looked at him shyly through the small pointed leaves.

"Why are you shy with me?" he asked. "Why

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were you pale when you came in?" He gazed longingly upward at the hand which held the branch. "If we were alone I should have it in mine," he said boldly.

He had often taken her hand and kissed it, doing it with so much tenderness and reverence that she did not resist him, though wondering at herself and at him. The men of her own land who loved her did not presume to touch her, and had they done so she knew that a reserve, a delicate frosty maidenhood would have caused her to repel them at once. Now she smiled at Gino and shook her head behind the branch.

"This morning I made pilgrimages to places where we had been together," he said. "I stood by the Fanciulla Danzio which had pleased you much, and the Grecian vase where youths and maidens, young like love, dance for thousands of years. And then I took a little carriage, looking carefully at the horse first to see that the harness did not rub him, because I know that is what you would have me do, and I drove to the fountain of the brimming bowl that stands under the ilex on the terrace of the Villa Medici, and I stood by it as we had stood. I remembered the light of the flowing water in your eyes — Are you listening?"

"Yes."

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“Look at me!”

“Hush! Hush!”

His voice changed and broke. “I love you very much,” he said. “You do not know what great happiness I have because of you — nor what great pain.”

Before leaving the luncheon she had made Curatulo her first concession. He was to call that evening to inquire for Mrs. Garrison, and if the older woman was not able to receive him, Anne would be there, alone.

When she went out again into the street, life seemed a wonderfully spacious and radiant thing. “But it is ridiculous,” she told herself, “to be so happy and so unhappy in a single day.”

That afternoon she found herself again in the shadows, and Lady Fitz-Smith was the genie who conjured them. The girl was “pouring” at the reception of an American who had not yet adopted the convenient but impersonal custom of having servants attend to that function, and late in the afternoon she felt a large firm hand upon her shoulder and heard the Dowager’s voice in her ear.

“Give me a cup of tea, and let it be strong. Did you ask Curatulo with whom he was walking yesterday on the Corso Italia?”

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"You mean his cousin? No, I did not ask, he told me."

"Cousin!" cried Lady Fitz-Smith. "Cousin! Ho!"

She laughed with her strong warm voice, and moved away as some one else asked for more hot water; but Anne had heard enough. She knew that Curatulo had lied. She could not doubt his love for her; but he had lied, and with such ease, such dreadful deftness of touch!

While dispensing tea and striving to keep her mind on nice adjustments of cream and sugar, the thought of his untruth burned and burned.

She should despise him, she must cease to care with whom he walked or came or went, if she were to keep her self-respect; but in a maze of pain and bewilderment she realized her helplessness to keep this self-respect if it could only be on those terms. For she still cared. She must see him that evening, and give him a chance to explain what she felt could not be justified.

"I love you. You do not know what great happiness I have because of you, nor what great pain." The words were with her yet and his voice as he had spoken them. He loved her, yet he had walked with another woman under the Roman wall, and lied to her about it.

CHAPTER IX

STRANGERS

THAT evening Mrs. Garrison was still unable to leave her room; but Anne never wavered in her determination to see Gino when he came, and give him a chance for self-defense.

Fearing that Dioniseo, not realizing the possibility of her receiving a man alone, might send him away, she rang for the butler and told him that as Mrs. Garrison was unable to see callers she would speak to Signor Curatulo a few moments herself when he came that evening.

“*Si, signorina.*”

Dioniseo bowed; he advanced into the room to put an evening paper on the desk, and showed himself smiling and radiantly pleased. Few Italian servants are too well trained to show friendliness, and Dioniseo was sympathetic with all that concerned his American mistresses. It was now evident that he considered a romance, if not an actual engagement, to exist between the American signorina and her caller, and was so delighted thereby that he could scarcely resist saying so. It was the first

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time he had smiled that day, owing to his distress for Margaret's suffering; and Anne tried to imagine any northern person, servant or other, who could have felt so quick a sympathy. The fact that he had on several occasions lied genially to Margaret, and profited by commissions on the monthly *spesa*, did not make his sympathy less real.

"It is almost impossible to understand such beings," thought Anne desperately. "But one must try. One must be just."

She waited for Curatulo in the crimson salon, with its Van Dyck portrait and the gleam of pale ivories and flowers under shaded lights. In the midst of it all, Anne, dressed in a simple collarless gown of gray cashmere, seemed a small and alien presence. A fichu of white muslin was her only adornment, and the lustreless pleats of her dress fell in lines of uncompromising severity: a prim, austere little gown it was which she had put on, partly to do penance for what she felt to be the debasing softness of her willingness to receive Curatulo, partly as a testimony to herself and him of a complete absence of coquetry. She felt that the unbecomingness of the dress gave her a claim to self-respect. It stamped the occasion as one on which she sought neither to charm anew or even to hold, but merely to judge.

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"Signor Curatulo," announced Dioniseo from the doorway ; and Gino came in eagerly.

"You are pale again!" he exclaimed, holding her hand. "You look as you looked this morning!"

"Perhaps I am tired," she answered. "I have been with Aunt Margaret all the afternoon."

"How is that dear lady?"

"Better, but not able to see you."

"Good — that she is better, I mean." He smiled radiantly. "Are we not to sit down?"

She motioned him to an arm-chair, and seated herself on a sofa at some distance.

"I am very far away," he said, with boyish protest. "Am I to sit all the evening as far away as this?"

He occupied the edge only of a crimson chair, and it was evident that he had come to the interview full of happiness.

"What is it?" he asked ; "why do you sit rigid as a Cimabue Madonna?"

"Why did you tell me what was not true?"

Curatulo's eyes did not fall or waver ; they remained, on the contrary, very bright, very assured, and fixed upon her face.

"You told me she was your cousin, and she was not."

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"She was not," he assented easily. "You are quite right. Must I keep on sitting so far away."

"You told me a lie," said Anne. "Do you suppose I could possibly be as sorry that you walked with another woman as that you should tell me a lie?"

"Pooh!" he answered, "that was not a lie."

He disposed of it as lightly as though it had been a bit of melodrama, and his attitude toward it was so frank, so sunny, so assured, that she felt the grim and heavy thing that had weighed so awfully as she held it, grow suddenly light and almost unimportant under his view of it. His boyish ingenuousness, the funniness of his attitude, made her smile in spite of herself. But she was quickly grave again.

"The lady was a friend of mine some years ago. Perhaps we loved each other in a kind of way. She is a widow, about to be married again, and wished me to return her letters, and I asked for mine — for the same reason. We met in as obscure a place as possible for both our sakes ; and because of that, and while I was behaving in all honor toward you, do you think I would run the risk of losing you while a word of mine, a false or true one, could save you for me? You know nothing of life, or man, or love, my little Madonna, my Cimabue Madonna."

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Anne, with her hands still folded rigidly in her lap, and her face still pale, watched him gravely, feeling as though she were struggling against the lure of sirens' voices.

"How am I to know that this is true?" she asked.

He rose with some impatience.

"Dio! This becomes absurd," he cried. "What proof do you want? Shall I offer you an interview with the lady herself?"

"How could I believe her?" asked Anne. "How," she cried desperately, "can I believe anything among people who think nothing of a lie!"

He stood opposite her, with his hands thrust in his pockets, and his eyes fixed upon her with whimsical helplessness.

"Now I understand the dress," he said, "the stiff, the prim, the plain little dress. It was put on to punish me, to show me that you did not care whether or not you were charming to me. Well, and I am not punished! You are more charming to me than ever. You remind me of things unworldly and rare, of some flower that grows in a hidden place. As for what you call a lie—I would tell a hundred such if by doing so I could be sure to win you."

He was discarding what were for her sacred ob-

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ligations, and doing it manfully, buoyantly, with what she found to be a perilous charm.

"It is so different," she said. "What we think about life is so different that I do not see how we can ever understand each other. We must always be strangers."

"It is not so different," he exclaimed. "We are not strangers. I will not have it so." With an impulsive movement he drew a low cricket to her feet and sat upon it. "Now," he said, "we can talk better. Why do you mind so much about a little word? We will call it a lie if you will. There is nothing in the Bible against telling a lie."

Anne watched him wistfully.

"If one's heart is honest what is a word on the lips? I will not talk more of such a foolish matter! As for that 'cousin,' — what proof do you want that everything is not dead between us? You will see her engagement in the paper. Will that be enough?"

Anne covered her eyes with her hands and spoke with effort in a low and bitter voice.

"How can it be," she said, "when I hear what I hear on all sides of me; when a good, a respected woman like Lady Fitz-Smith says frankly that if she had loved a man not her husband she does not know what might not have happened."

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"Of course she does not know," exclaimed Gino.
"No woman with a heart can."

"The women of my land know," said Anne proudly.

He answered her, after a slight pause, and with some dryness: "I think that I must have seen more women of your land than you have."

He divined that the "New England" she spoke of so often as her home must be the small corner of a vast and miscellaneous country of which she knew almost nothing.

"Listen," he said. "You know that I love you. You know that if it is your wish, you may control my life as the moon controls the tides."

She did not answer, and suddenly, fiercely, he drew her hands from her eyes. "You know that I love you!"

"Yes."

"You believe."

"Yes! yes!"

"Dio!" he cried, flinging her hands from him. "And you do not love." Crossing his arms on his knees, he dropped his head on them, and for some time he did not speak or move.

Anne, looking at the dark bowed head so near her hand, yearned over him. He was to her in that moment as the child that could be comforted. If

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she did not touch his hair with her fingers, she felt that she must break into wild weeping. And yet he had lied to her so, and she must not weep.

The beautiful spacious room was silent, and the bowed head of Gino remained motionless at her knee; the strong dark hair, close to the nunlike dress. Once he lifted his face, took her hand, and holding it against his eyes bent his head as before.

"I cannot —" murmured Anne, struggling with herself more than with him.

"Be still!" he said sternly. "Have you no mercy? Would you let a dog thirst as I thirst?" His voice was broken, and Anne's hand on his eyelids was wet.

Then for a long time the silence continued as before, till the girl was almost broken.

Finally he raised his head, and still holding her hand turned it over slowly, pushed up the close gray sleeve, and kissed her wrist once, very slowly, just where the pulse is. Then he rose and moved away from her.

"Dear friend," he said quietly, "when do I see you again?"

CHAPTER X

EAST AND WEST

IT was Lady Fitz-Smith who finally explained away the suspicions she had aroused concerning Gino's walk on the Corso Italia. "Curatulo was fond of the woman, — it was after the death of Maria Pavlowa, — and she had been mad about him. She was married at the time, and of course that was in one sense an advantage, for when a woman is married the man has everything to gain and nothing to risk!"

Mrs. Garrison did not repress her start of amazed indignation at this point of the Dowager's monologue.

"I think Curatulo soon grew tired of her," continued Lady Fitz-Smith, "but he was very loyal, as Italians often are; 'constant but not faithful.' He did n't care for any one else, and was both too indolent and too kind-hearted to desert her. When her husband was found to have tuberculosis and ordered to Switzerland his wife did not dare not to go with him, and I think our Gino was relieved enough. The husband lived in the mountains some years and then he died, but in the mean time she

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met another man and fell in love with him in the same wild unreasoning manner with which she had loved Curatulo; and now she is going to marry him, though he is a worthless fellow and has debts as long as his pedigree. *Ecco!* Gino is a free man and has been for some years. I did not know about her second love and marriage when I saw her walking with him the other day, and thought it fair that you should know if he was playing double."

Margaret closed firm lips upon her indignation at such revelations until she was alone with her niece. She was not sure that Anne had understood, and when she felt that duty compelled her to find out, she asked the question with an embarrassment that brought a faint color to her middle-aged face. Yes, Anne had understood, but she was not embarrassed and her face paled rather than flushed.

"What can you say of such a man?"

"That any man would be the same who had found such things accepted about him from the age when he could find anything at all."

Anne's words were spoken with a certain resolution, and seemed the expression of a final and well-considered attitude. The girl had, in fact, faced the possibilities of Gino's past and had accepted them. What pain the acceptance had cost her no one but herself would ever know.

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Early in January Rome experienced two weeks of winter weather. There was ice on her fountains, and the sun rose every morning to find the gardens delicately sheathed in frost. But roses still bloomed hardily on the stone walls of the Queen Mother's Palace, and under the terrace that leads from the top of the famous Scala to the Pincio, irises were in flower, and orange trees bore blossoms and fruit in the quiet sunshine.

The hotels were filling rapidly with tourists, and a horde of others who, lured by the glamour of titles and cosmopolitanism, sought such precarious social life as their position as strangers could obtain for them. Adventurers swarmed in the halls of the Grand Hotel, and every afternoon the great tea-room at the Excelsior received and disgorged a crowd ranging in social quality from the Roman princess to the dingiest of German or American tourists, all of whom drank tea and ate cold muffins in an impure air, overheated to the point of suffocation, while a band of charming musicians played almost inaudibly through the overwhelming sound of many voices, high pitched, as much with social excitement as with the effort to be heard above their neighbors.

As in all large cities, there were balls and dinners and concerts every evening, and people went

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from one to another, growing constantly more breathless, restless, and excited, less physically fitted to continue as they became less nervously able to pause.

Among the tourists there was hurry and breathlessness also, for with three hundred and fifty churches to visit, and possibly the largest proportion of great statues ever assembled in one place, to inspect, besides a stupendous mass of ruins and historical monuments, the spirit of the conscientious sight-seer was almost as much fatigued as that of the socially ambitious. It was the boast of one that though they stayed in Rome three months, social duties had been so pressing that no time for visiting even the Colosseum had been found. The others felt pride in the fact that they had seen one hundred of the three hundred and fifty churches in four days.

Some few there were who made leisure to browse in the Eternal City among her treasures of sense and spirit; but these were few.

Of the vigorous and intelligent people who were successfully building their nation, the stranger in Rome sees little, and it was among them that Gino Curatulo belonged by reason of his birth and age. But accident had thrown him on the race-course of pleasure, and it may be that too great love of

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woman had destroyed what ambition he might once have had. Moreover, by temperament he was more in sympathy with Rome as the past had made her, than with Rome the capital of modern Italy.

Anne, conscious of his ability, could not reconcile herself to his idleness. His one volume of distinguished prose had gained him recognition among the younger writers, and in exploring expeditions and his short service during the disastrous Abyssinian campaign he had shown courage and resource. Why abandon it all? Why not serve in some form the country which, in spite of a superficial apathy, she knew that he deeply and passionately loved?

To these questions Gino would shrug his shoulders. "What is the use? Italy does not need me, and there are so many others to serve her!"

Perhaps the apathy went deeper than Anne realized. She had been surprised by revelations of the sadness and disillusion that often sits at the heart of this Italian people, with their ardent personalities, their vividness of smile and gesture. The working classes are not gay, as the northern and heavier races of the same class are gay when they eat or idle together, and it has been said that to find actual merriment among the people of Rome, one must go to the Swiss Guard.

Gino was not fundamentally a happy person.

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Like so many Italians he was without religion, or any definite hope of life in the world to come. This earthly life of brief joys, of death and parting, was all that he saw, and he was conscious that joy is brief, that death and parting are inevitable. Of what use then was it to strive or work? The end would come soon, another would take his place, and there was no one to care for his success. Years ago there had been one who cared, but she was dead. Since then — he shrugged his shoulders again.

It was soon after this that he told Anne of Maria Pavlowa. They had gone to hear high mass at one of the churches, but turning away from the crowds, stood by the iron grating of a chapel, looking through it with unseeing eyes, while Gino told his story. It was evident that the new love had not destroyed his loyalty to the old. His voice as he spoke of the dead woman was low and full of feeling, and his face was more sad than any face Anne had yet seen, as he stared with heavy eyes through the iron grating to a dim virgin, and beyond her. Loyalty to past feeling is almost universal among Italians, and Gino made no effort to dissimulate his, even in the presence of the girl whose love he was now seeking.

“They guarded her well in Russia, wolves that they are!” he said at the end of his story, which

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was substantially the one told by Lady Fitz-Smith. "They would not let me near her. If I could have reached her she would have come with me, for she was brave and did not care for the world, and she loved me — as I loved her. She was not strong, but I would have taken care of her, and made her happy, and then she would have been well. But it was not to be. She died! It was not to be!" He gave his familiar fatalistic shrug and was silent.

It was evident that he saw no element of wrong in what he had proposed to do, and that for the woman who would have been willing to sin before society and religion for his sake he had only reverence. Anne wondered ; but she could not personally condemn him, nor was she jealous of his loyalty to a past love. She even welcomed it eagerly, as she did all traits of the Italian character which could increase her respect for Italians.

During those days she was visibly worn by the struggle between her feeling for Gino Curatulo, and her distrust of his nature. She had been trained to comparative order of thought and action, to believe that feeling should be controlled by reason, and that the only thing which really mattered in the world was to do right. So it was inevitable that this disorder, this confusion of right and wrong, should be a torment to her. The man who loved

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her, and whom she found herself so perilously near to loving, did not share these ideals. It was even possible that the questions of right and wrong did not interest him, for he was an instinctive rather than an ethical being, as Lady Fitz-Smith had said. She did not know that he could not be cruel and revengeful, and thought it even probable that he could. That his ideal of truth was dim, if it had any existence at all, she knew also. But she could not doubt his capacity to feel. He had sacrificed a career that his mother should not be lonely. He had loved Maria Pavlowa well enough to risk social existence and life itself for her. Gino could love, and was not love a royal substitute for ethics?

So Anne argued with herself, doubt and confidence moving like shuttles in her brain, and almost every day she saw him. Her aunt, who was possessed by a great distrust of the inevitable qualities of his race, made plans to leave Rome; but Curatulo quietly said that he would follow, and she did not feel prepared to forbid him to do so, for she was too thoroughly imbued with the American ideal of freedom in such matters to attempt a severely coercive measure. Anne was of an age to spoil her life in her own way, and after several conversations in which the older woman warned and

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the girl listened in silence, Margaret knew the affair to be beyond her control.

She had written at some length to Anne's father, telling what she knew of Gino's past and explaining the standards of the civilization which had nurtured him ; showing why his acceptance of them would be sufficient to disqualify him for marriage with his daughter : after this she could do no more. It was impossible to prevent Gino and Anne from meeting in society, and rather than run the risk of his being received alone in the palace, Mrs. Garrison continued to take them both for afternoon excursions in her limousine, where Gino sat with his cane between his knees upon a small seat facing the two Americans, and tried manfully, but not always with success, to devote himself to the older woman.

Mrs. Garrison thought that a man more helplessly in love she had never seen, and his condition was so evident that she would have been forced to believe in his disinterestedness even if she had not told him the insignificance of Anne's fortune.

CHAPTER XI

A BARBARIAN FROM THE NEW WORLD

ONE day, just before Christmas, Mrs. Garrison and her niece drove out to the "Tre Fontane," and Curatulo went with them, sitting upon his usual seat.

"Of course you know the legend in connection with the 'Tre Fontane,'" said Margaret; "but St. Paul was probably never executed there, because he was probably never in Rome."

"There is a debated point," said Curatulo, who was invariably irritated by Mrs. Garrison's attitude toward tradition.

He looked across at Anne with eyes that asked, "How long? How long?" and Anne's eyes dropped quickly. She was dressed in the black velvet costume, and the small black hat with the wing of clear scarlet, that she had worn on the morning in the Borghese Garden when he had first walked with her; and he loved her especially well in that suit.

Mrs. Garrison pointed to the excavations which have ripped open the fields by the road to the Porta Paolo.

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"How interesting it is," she said. "I almost feel as if I must make Tom spend next winter here, in order to see what comes out of them."

Gino looked upon the heaps of dusty masonry without enthusiasm.

"It is not beautiful," he said.

"They look to me like bricks, and there were no bricks before the time of Nero, so it must be something more recent," commented Margaret, still looking.

"For me, they excavate too much," said Curatulo perversely. "When I was a little boy the centre of the Colosseum was of grass, and a hermit lived there, and there was a great cross. Sometimes the smoke of the hermit's fire went up so still,—so still,—and floated out like a little stream through one of the arches, and in the afternoon the shadow of the cross stretched so still—so still, along the grass—It almost made a monk of me. What have we now? Nothing but holes. And what have we found in these holes? Walls where French soldiers camped. Is there anything in this to refresh the spirit of man?"

"Is not knowledge necessary to the spirit of man?"

"Knowledge, madame—" He shrugged his shoulders. "Why must we know so many things?"

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For my part, I think we know already too much."

Mrs. Garrison forbore to argue. She understood his irritation with her constant presence, but could not leave Anne alone with a man who seemed always waiting for an opportunity to take her in his arms. One or two Americans had loved Anne quite as much as did Curatulo, but she knew that they would not have sought even to touch her. The Latin would despise such an idea of self-control, even had his temperament permitted it. The temperament counted for a great deal, and Margaret was reaching the perception that lack of social freedom between the boy and girl of Latin countries is something more than the survival of an outworn social régime.

The drive out to the Tre Fontane is not an attractive one. The Campagna as seen from the road has few reaches of distance, and on this mid-December afternoon, with a *scirocco* blowing under a low gray sky, the wayside seemed merely dingy and unprosperous. At the basilica of *San Paolo Fuori le mure* the older woman suggested stopping, but Anne protested almost petulantly. She did not, she said, like San Paolo's. It was so especially and peculiarly empty: there was something even cruel in such emptiness combined with such brilliant marble walls.

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Curatulo looked at her gratefully. "You always say what I want you to say," he told her; "or almost always," he added boldly.

"I want to get out to the Three Fountains," continued Anne, "where you say it is still, and far away, and the monks never speak, and walk in the straight high alley of eucalyptus trees."

"We will walk there," said Gino.

"Yes," answered the girl.

"You are two very frivolous young people," commented Margaret, looking out of the window, because she felt suddenly that she was a spy, and a useless one.

Leaving the car at the entrance to the little group of churches, Margaret became immersed in Bae-deker's information concerning the spot where St. Paul is said to have been executed, and Gino was able to speak alone with Anne.

"How I suffer upon that little seat!" he complained, stretching his arms. "I am small, but the seat I must sit upon is smaller. Neither with arms nor legs can I move from the time I get in till the time I get out. And my cane — have you observed my sufferings with the cane? every time the car jolts, which is often —"

"Your Roman roads are so bad," said Anne.

"Your springs are so hard. Every time the car

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jolts the knob of the cane hits me under the chin. Sometimes it causes me to bite my tongue, and already I must be black and blue. Look !”

He tipped back his head, and Anne, laughing and happy, with more color in her face than she had shown during the drive, examined his chin.

“No,” she said, “there is no sign of injury ; but if it hurts so, why not sit outside the car with the chauffeur ?”

“Am I an apocalyptic beast with eyes all around my head, that I can see you behind me while I sit beside the chauffeur? Am I a fish-blooded man of the North that I can sit with you near, where I cannot see you? No, I shall continue to sit upon this little seat so long as Mrs. Garrison insists upon accompanying us, and my only comfort is that by doing so I make her very uncomfortable, for the limousine is small, she is large, and to-day I observed that she was troubled by not knowing what to do with her umbrella nor the little package of sweets she bought at Aragno’s. Sometimes I almost pity that good lady. At first she feared so much that I was trying to marry you for your fortune ; but now that she knows I know you have none, she is still afraid to leave us alone for fear that I may kiss you—naughty Latin that I am ! Well, as to the last she is right, for it is certain that I

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shall kiss you the first moment I may. Tell me, gray nun, would it please you that I ride in front with the chauffeur where we could not look at or speak to each other?"

"There is no nun here," said Anne. And she laughed again.

Under the low dark sky, among the low dim buildings, and the sombre trees planted by men who never spoke, Anne stood radiant and vivid, with a reckless, helpless happiness on her face.

"There is no gray nun here," she repeated, and there was that in her eyes which made Gino catch his breath.

"Anne!" he exclaimed; "Anne!" and he moved a step nearer.

Her eyelashes were suddenly wet, her face tremulous with the response he had longed for, and just then came the noise of another automobile. Gino with his back to the entrance saw Anne's expression change to amazed recognition, and he turned, to see a tall young man descend from a taxicab, slam the rickety door behind him, and hurry into the inclosure, waving his hat as he came.

"Why, Jack!" cried Anne; and her bewilderment was evidently complete.

"Yes," said the tall young man, "it's I." And he shook hands heartily, his lean, large-boned face

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expressing a high degree of pleasure. His body, like his face, was lean and long, and his clothes fitted him with what seemed to the Italian unpardonable looseness and informality. His tie, of light blue that matched his eyes, hung free in the wind, and when he had done waving his cap he put it in his pocket instead of upon his head. Unpardonably informal, also, was the brief nod with which he acknowledged Anne's introduction.

"Signor Curatulo, one of my best new friends — Dr. Swift, one of my best old ones."

Gino stared coldly. What could this young man be doctor of?

"I have been following you for nearly an hour," said Jack. "I recognized that scarlet wing on your hat through the back window of the limousine — it was all I could see of you, but I knew it because I helped you choose it; so I jumped in a taxi and followed you as fast as I could. The driver was sympathetic. Halfway out he turned round to tell me there were two signoras in the car ahead and a signore, and he was as pleased as I was to run you down at last. It seems rather rum, Anne, to hear you called a signora. Where, by the way, is Mrs. Garrison, for I suppose she was the other one?"

At that moment Margaret came out of the little

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church at the right, and there were more greetings and explanations in which Curatulo had no part. Jack Swift was to him a being who lacked the fine points of perception and courtesy, ignored the polite details of dress, and shook a woman's hand as though it belonged to a boy or another man. He was an Anglo-Saxon barbarian who loved Anne, and who feared him, Gino Curatulo, so little that he looked at him amiably when he looked at him at all!

"I came over on a sky-rocket decision," continued Jack, explaining his presence. "The Wilkinsons wanted me to take their boy to Italy for the winter. They were afraid to let him go with any one but a physician on account of his heart, and they made me an offer so very much worth my while that here I am. We only arrived in Rome last night, and now I am ready for anything. What does this rather melancholy spot signify?"

Margaret explained as they walked down the avenue of eucalyptus trees, and Jack sauntered slowly with his hands in his pockets while he listened, looking about him with shrewd and temporarily indifferent eyes.

Anne, with Curatulo beside her, walked close behind the others.

"Am I to understand that the gentlemen of

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your country practice medicine as a profession?" he asked.

And Anne, after a surprised glance at him, assented quietly. She saw with amazement that he was angry, and probably jealous.

"So they work to save a person's life one night, and send in a bill for it the next day." He shrugged his shoulders. "You Americans are a strange people!"

At the entrance to the church of *San Paolo alle Tre Fontane* the group shifted, and Anne found herself alone with Jack on the other side of the leather curtain. He looked down at her with quizzical eyes.

"Who is the dago?" he asked casually.

"My friend." The answer was tense and rapid. She felt as if she had been suddenly lashed, and knew that she grew white; but it was dark in the church and Jack could not see her distinctly.

"Humph!" he answered.

In a different mood Anne would have expressed her disappointment in the fountains. She had imagined them coming from the ground in some sad spot under cypress trees, and to find them inclosed in masonry would have been an unpleasant surprise if she had been in a mood to care for such surprises.

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Jack looked at them with his hands still in his pockets and his lips pursed as though in a whistle.

"It was obliging of the old fellow's head to jump so geometrically," he remarked, "otherwise they could n't have built a church over the places it hit."

Gino put up his monocle and looked at the American.

"Barbarian!" he muttered fiercely.

Mrs. Garrison said nothing; but she, like the others, gave scant attention to the fountains, for she was preoccupied by seeking a moment of solitude in company with Jack Swift that she might tell him of what she felt to be Anne's peril, and ask his help.

The girl also said nothing. Her face was still white, and her hands held each other in her muff to stop their trembling, for she was angry, fiercely angry with Jack.

And so without speaking they all turned and left the place which to some is the awe-striking ground of martyrdom, to others a legend-haunted spot where the imagination plays agreeably with the thought of sacred hidden waters guarded by silent men, and to yet more a tawdry hoax kept for the purpose of ensnaring the ignorant, and bringing money to the church. The last view was

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Jack's, and he expressed himself briefly to that effect as they went back under the eucalyptus trees, whose straight supple trunks, amber-hued under their torn bark, rise up on both sides of the walk to lose themselves high above it in the crisp, pointed leaves which cast so scant a shadow.

Anne passed alone where she was to have walked with Gino, and under a sad sky the tree-trunks seemed to be bleeding where their bark was torn away. He did not come to her side, and Jack was held by Mrs. Garrison, who went straight to the point, undisturbed by any vision of bleeding trees.

"What do you think of Curatulo?"

"He seems like most other foreigners. I never can abide any of 'em," said Jack easily.

"He is in love with Anne."

"Other men have been in love with Anne. Why is n't this one walking with her?" And Jack with a movement of his head indicated Curatulo, who walked at some distance swinging his cane.

"I don't know, he usually is. Listen, — Anne cares for him."

Jack stopped and looked at his companion. "You don't mean —"

"I am afraid so. Jack, can't you do something?"

He did not reply and walked on as before; but his bright blue eyes and clean-shaven lips grew stern.

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“My God!” he exclaimed at last. “Anne — and that!” He jerked his head in Curatulo’s direction.

“Much of your feeling is prejudice,” said Margaret decisively; “and there is nothing against Curatulo save that he is a Latin. But I cannot trust them as I trust our own men. Anne would be unhappy.”

Jack Swift did not say that he would help, and Margaret could only surmise that he would care to do so. No one but himself, and possibly Anne, knew what his feeling for her was. His family was an old one, but extravagantly poor; and he had been prevented from making a normal start in life by several years of ill health, contracted in the fever camps of young men who went south in hopes of seeing active service during our war with Spain.

He had drawn upon his small capital to put himself through the medical school, and now, nearing his thirtieth year, he was only just beginning to work, with a mother and sister almost dependent upon him.

Margaret would have liked to see Jack try and marry Anne himself, but considering his circumstances this did not seem possible.

At the door of a room where the monks sell

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liquor made from eucalyptus trees, the party came together again; and while Margaret and Anne drank in silence, Jack talked cheerfully to Curatulo, asking him questions about Italy, which were answered with perfect if chilling courtesy.

On leaving the place Jack went to Anne's side with a firmness which left her no escape.

"Your aunt tells me this fellow is really a particular friend of yours," he said, "so I am sorry I called him a 'dago' — sorry, that is if you minded. Did you?"

"Yes, Jack," she answered, her anger falling under his repentance. The answer and her way of giving it made him thoughtful for several moments. "I know how he seems to you," continued the girl, speaking rapidly. "They all seemed that way to me at first, but it is only prejudice. They have so much that is better than what we have, and for the other things — the things we cannot understand — we must try to be fair."

Her voice was a little breathless, for she felt that her friend was not doing himself justice. His evident ill-humor with Jack was unworthy of the man she knew him to be.

The American answered nothing, and by the time they reached the automobiles they were joined by the other two.

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"We have only a week in Rome," said Jack to Anne. "When can I come to see you?"

"Almost any time except to-morrow afternoon," she answered; and as Curatulo had arranged to see her then, she sent him a shy little look that reminded him of it, and begged of him not to be foolish and jealous any more.

But Curatulo's answering look was unsympathetic.

"Say the day after, then, at about three?"

"That will do nicely."

Jack could not take off his hat because it was in his pocket, and his easy nod of farewell brought again to Curatulo's lips the word, "Barbarian!"

The American went off whistling softly, prodded his sleeping chauffeur between the shoulders, and drawing his long legs with some difficulty into the taxicab, was off in a moment, waving his hand cordially as he disappeared amid a cloud of dust, a nerve-racking noise, and a strong smell of gasoline.

Curatulo, perfectly groomed and finished, opened the door of Margaret's limousine and held it while she entered. As Anne passed in he met her look with a cold and alien stare.

"I ride home upon the outside," he said, and he closed the door.

CHAPTER XII

THE MADNESS OF GINO

SO it happened that at the very moment when Anne admitted to herself that she loved Gino Curatulo, she was forced into the realization of a strange and, to her, an ignoble aspect of him. To have suspected her so quickly after his recognition of her feeling, and to act without reason or trust—were these things worthy of a man she loved? But she remembered the moments of her own lack of confidence. What had she shown of trust on the day when Gino had walked with another woman under the Roman wall? And she drew this memory to her joyously, for it relieved her of the pain she felt in condemning him as less worthy than herself.

When they reached the *portone* of their palace it was already dusk, and she could scarcely see his features as he helped her from the car; but she felt that his mood had changed. Though he might still be bitter and angry, she was conscious of his suffering, and she almost smiled because the pain was so uncalled-for and she was so sure of her power to comfort it.

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He refused Margaret's suggestion that he should come in for tea, and also her offer to have the limousine take him home.

"Madame is most kind," he said, "but I prefer to walk."

"What time do you come to-morrow?" asked Anne.

"I do not come to-morrow."

Mrs. Garrison had entered the lighted *portone* and could already be seen climbing the wide bare stairway to her apartment. The limousine, with a brazen cry, had gone down the driveway, and Anne stood alone with Curatulo in the dim quiet place, where the fountain splashed and the crumbling statue was losing itself in the shadows.

"I do not come to-morrow," said Gino; but he lingered, and she felt that he did so helplessly.

Margaret called to her, and Anne answered back, "I am not coming in quite yet. Tell Dioniseo he can close the door. — You will come to-morrow?" she added, turning to Curatulo.

"No."

"You will come to-morrow."

"You give your favors fairly," he said. "A man at three to-day, another at three to-morrow. It is as you will, but Gino Curatulo does not accept such favors. He does not share. You may give all your

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hours to the other — to the American who loves you.”

“Jack does not love me,” said Anne.

“Do you take me for a fool?” asked the Italian bitterly.

Putting his cane under his arm, he drew out a cigarette case, and lit a cigarette with an attempt at nonchalance; but he did not move away, and when he held the lighted match to his face Anne saw that his hands trembled.

She thought it foolish and lovable to suffer so much for so slight a cause, and she spoke his name softly.

“Gino.”

It was the first time she had called him by anything but his family name, according to the Italian custom.

“It is said that the women of your country are pleased by lighting fires before which they have no wish to warm themselves — they play with men. Do you think I am one to be played with?”

“You know,” she said, “that I do not play.”

“How should I know it? Another man follows you through the streets, he walks with you, he chooses the wing on your hat.”

“He is my old friend,” said the girl gravely. “He is like my brother.”

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"I know nothing of such brothers."

"I have told you that he does not love me."

"I know nothing of such statements. I can see."

It was now evident that he was not to be easily comforted. "How long, may I ask, has this man been in Rome, and when did you manage to send him word that you would be at the Tre Fontane to-day? Doubtless during that one hour when it seemed I was to be prevented from going myself."

It seemed to Anne that he must be insane; but suddenly, and much against her will, she found herself very angry. "I must not let it master me," she thought. And again, "I must be reasonable, I must be just, I must realize how hard self-control is to one who has hot Southern blood." But she could not trust herself to answer him, and walking to the fountain, she looked into the basin mechanically and leaned her hands on the stone rim.

"I must try to understand. I must try to be just," she said to the chilly waters; and hearing that he came and stood beside her she spoke to him slowly.

"It is incredible that you should say such things to me."

"I know that I love you," he said less bitterly.

"I know that you hurt me—that you insult me."

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He heard the tears in her voice, and his anger dropped as quickly as a tropical storm.

"I love you," he said quickly; "I wish only to bring you happiness. I will say no more of it if it makes you suffer. See, it is over"; and, bending, he kissed her fingers as they rested on the cold stone. "See, I forgive."

But Anne could not accept this view of the situation.

"And what is it you forgive?" she asked, still turned away from him, and speaking slowly. "It is not a question of forgiveness, but of trust. We must understand one another, we must trust, if — if there is to be any possibility of happiness between us."

"I trust you," he said. "I believe all that you tell me. But you do not know of what a man's love is made. You do not know that it is torture for me when another man looks at you as the American looked. But I will say no more. He is of the past. Anne — Anne — oh, the dear, queer, little name! And now that we are friends once more, grant me one favor. Do not see this barbarian when he comes."

She turned and looked at Gino with wonder.

"Not see Jack when I told him he could come?" she asked.

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“Certainly not.”

“When it is our last chance of seeing each other?”

“It is better there should be no chance!”

She turned away again and looked into the fountain.

“I cannot do a thing like that,” she said.

“Ah, you cannot — Good! I say, very good.” His voice rang suddenly with violent and sarcastic bitterness.

“You ask me to offend and hurt an old friend.”

“And old friends come first. Well spoken.”

“You know that he does not come first.”

“Good, good. We know that he does not come first.”

“You cannot ask me to do what would humiliate me in my own eyes.”

“Ah, so we have a sensitive conscience.”

“Gino!” Her voice rang sharply, for her patience had snapped.

“Gino? And since when this favor of intimacy?”

“You are mad!”

“So. The old friends are received. The new friends are mad. Well spoken. Well spoken. Listen!” He took her arm roughly. “Let us not play with words like children with marbles. You

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know what I feel. You will give up seeing your friend ? ”

“ I cannot.”

“ You will not.”

She did not answer, and still she bent over the fountain.

“ You will not ? ” he repeated.

“ I will not,” she answered, and her words were low and difficult.

There was a pause before he said : “ It is well. Now at last I have understood. You must pardon the poor Italian for being so stupid, for mistaking the false coin for the true, for thinking that play was love, that unfaith was faith. He must pardon himself, if he can, for having given his love where it was to be made a light thing of.”

She did not answer. His words seemed such as could deserve no answer. She heard him leave her ; a moment later he paused on the road as it crossed just below the terrace where she stood, and she saw him light a cigarette with deliberate slowness, giving her a vision of his dark and violent face before the match fell, and he went down into the dusk.

It was almost dark, but she stood where he had left her. The stone upon which she leaned was cold, and she felt the chill of it mounting upward until it seemed to reach her heart.

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Incredible things had been said ; cruel, unworthy things. This was the dominant impression of her stunned consciousness. Unbelievable interpretations had been put upon her actions, and at first she remained bewildered and numbed by the violence and causelessness of the thing which had happened. He had been hurt without reason ; he had struck without justice or self-control. He had felt and acted like a child, but with the dangerous resolution of a man. These ideas she put together laboriously, and then she looked at them.

What did they mean?

That he had gone forever ? That it was well that he had gone, since happiness with a nature of such violence and unreason would have been impossible !

She tried to steady her consciousness on this aspect of what had happened ; but suddenly, as though without her own volition, she cried out in a loud voice : “ I must have him back ! ” and flung her face upward toward the stars. Her self-control was broken and she sobbed wildly, walking to and fro on the terrace while she sought to gain control of herself. The pain of losing him was more than she could bear. She must have him back ; and now she knew herself to be helplessly in love with Gino Curatulo. What did it matter that he was violent,

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that he was jealous, that he was unreasonable, when he was so much else that a woman loves? Should she not cherish him more because there were things she must forgive him, as a mother sometimes cherishes her most troublesome child? She knew that all her reason and all her patience must be brought to the altar of their happiness if the altar were to remain; and in this time of exaltation she was ready, even eager, for the sacrifice.

She had said in her anger that she would see Jack, but told herself that she might have been unreasonable. It was necessary now, and for always, to be very, very reasonable, since Gino could not be. She must recognize the burning and the anguish of jealousy as it is felt by Latin peoples, and would she be worthy of giving and receiving love if she ignored this anguish? Moreover, now that she returned Gino's love did she not give him the right to demand that no other man should be received into her intimacy?

A Northern man would have been incapable of behaving as he had done, — but she had not been able to love a Northern man. It was Gino that she loved, — Gino, with his faults of tropical violence and unreason, with his sweetness, and his charm, — and by his side she was ready to make these things

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her sorrow and her joy so long as they both should live.

Again she lifted her face to the stars, but now her tears flowed quietly, rather with happiness than pain, for Anne had surrendered.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LOVE OF GINO

HER letter to Jack was short. It told him she could not see him, and that until the day when she could explain why, she begged him to forgive her and try to believe her, as always, his friend.

Then she wrote to Gino ; but with the pen in her hand she felt unexpected resentment toward the man she loved. "I have told my friend not to come because his coming seemed to hurt you so. The hurt was without cause, and to relieve you of it I have had to humiliate myself in my own eyes." And then she tore the paper in two, for she did not wish to show him anger, or perhaps unreason.

"I have told Jack not to come," she wrote again, "because his coming hurt you." But this did not please her because it gave no suggestion of the wound he had given to her dignity.

"I have written Jack not to come," she wrote at last ; and let it stand without addition of beginning or signature.

This was late at night, after her aunt had gone

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to bed ; and the next morning pride alone prevented her from sending the note by a messenger. She let it go by mail and spent the afternoon at home because, though it was almost impossible that he should receive the letter in time to come to her, it would be impossible to endure the afternoon if she felt that she might be missing him.

To her aunt she told the truth.

“Curatulo and I have quarreled,” she said. “I do not know whether he will come this afternoon or not ; but I am going to wait.”

“I am sure that he has been unreasonable and hateful about something,” said Mrs. Garrison ; and Anne’s silence was an assent.

“Why do you wait for him ?” asked the older woman. “It would do him good to come here and find you out.”

Anne smiled a little bitterly.

“He is not a man to learn that sort of lesson,” she said. “Hurt his pride in a certain way, and he would go, never to come back.”

“Child ! child !” cried her aunt, “I cannot endure this sort of thing for you. He is a man to break your heart.”

“It may be,” answered the girl slowly, “for — he has won it.”

She waited alone through the afternoon and it

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grew dark before she would have a light, because lights meant that the hour was late ; and then, when she must have them, she told herself that Roman mails were slow, and it was foolish to think he could have received her note so soon. But misery goaded her like fever. Neither in books, nor letter-writing, nor wise counsels, could she find relief. If he made no response to her note and persisted in his jealousy and violence, he would prove himself unworthy of any thought of hers ; but neither in this reasonableness could she find comfort, for if he was so unworthy there could be no more happiness for her in this world.

“Men have died, and worms have eaten them ; but not for love,” she told herself. Women had anguished and been tortured and gazed back from a few years upon the anguish and torture, wondering why it had been. Those things she had seen in her own short life ; but looking at them now they also were without comfort—futile as the mouthing of fools.

It was nearly six o'clock when Dioniseo brought something on a silver plate, and she thought it might be Gino's card, but feared a disappointment so much that she dared not lift her hand to take what the plate contained.

“What is it ?” she asked, looking up into the

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friendly face of her Italian servant, unaware how wan and startled her own had become.

“A letter, signorina.” He placed it respectfully on the table beside her and withdrew.

The handwriting was Gino’s.

“Sweetheart, thank you, thank you!” she read. “When may I say the words to your dear self? I would come to-night but that I could not see you alone. And when I see you next it must be alone. Will you not walk again in the Borghese Gardens? To-morrow morning at eleven I shall wait in the Piazza Siena. Do not keep me waiting long.”

The next morning she met Curatulo in the Borghese Gardens as he had asked her to do, and they sat together on a moss-grown and crumbling step of the amphitheatre which forms a lovely and spacious ellipse about a sunken lawn. The warm *scirocco* was still blowing, and bending before it the umbrella pines above the walls tossed wildly against a low and stormy sky. It was quiet where they sat sheltered from wind by the southern wall, but there was not yet quiet in the heart of Anne.

During one exalted hour she had found something that was almost rapture in forgiving Gino his faults of violence and unreason. That she

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could so forgive him seemed to be the sign and seal of her entire love for him. But now, seated by his side, with happiness at her hand, she was conscious of bitterness that she could not give reverence where she gave love. She yearned indescribably to look up to his nature, instead of down to it, and she turned on him a face that was white and reproachful.

“I have done what you asked me. I have denied my old friend and humiliated myself in my own eyes,” she said.

Gino’s aspect was brilliant and forceful. It was evident that for himself he had neither regret nor reproaches ; but his smile softened to tenderness when he saw her pallor and distress.

“Sweetheart,” he said gently, “is not this foolishness ?”

“I made myself think there was reason in what you asked of me and that it was right for me to yield ; but now I know that I did not yield because I thought it right.”

“Sweetheart,” he said again, “is not this more foolishness ?”

His voice was still gentle, though in truth her speech seemed made of the veriest foolishness. Her ancestors had hungered after righteousness and taken joy in self-sacrifice ; his had yielded to the

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demands of a warm and imperious life : how could he understand ?

“ Why, then, did you yield ? ” he asked.

Anne turned away her head.

“ You did it for me ! ”

She paused with her head still turned from him, and then spoke suddenly and with bitterness.

“ It does not hurt me so much to do wrong for you as that you should wish me to do it,” she said.

Gino considered this remark with some impatience, for were they not wasting precious moments ?

“ I am tired of the word wrong ! I am tired of the word right ! ” he said, with the hardihood that always delighted some unregenerate part of her being. “ Moreover, I do not understand what this is all about.”

“ Yesterday *I* could not understand,” she answered sadly ; and they sat for a while in silence with something between them — the something that must separate one who refers all things to a standard of morality from the one who refers them to a standard of feeling.

Anne sat rather desolately with her hands idle in her muff, and her pallid face turned away from the man she loved.

“ Can we ever understand each other ? ” she asked, half of herself.



CAN WE EVER UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

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"We can love each other," answered Gino; and putting out his hand he drew one of hers from the muff and held it. She did not turn toward him, but neither did she draw her hand away.

"I do not like you to be so pale," he said. "Sweetheart, is it because *I* have done wrong that you are pale?"

He answered the question with humorous tenderness, and then, as she did not answer and left her hand in his, he turned it over, and slowly unbuttoned the top button of her glove.

"Is it because *you* have done wrong that you are pale?" he asked in the same tone; and receiving no answer he undid the second button.

"I will not share you with any one, whether it is right or wrong," he said. "Do you wish me to share you?"

No, Anne did not wish to be shared. She murmured this answer and Gino unfastened the last button, then very slowly with his eyes fixed upon her averted and now drooping face he rolled the glove backwards and pulled it off. Then he kissed her fingers one by one.

"Tell me, Anne, why you came to the Garden this morning?" he asked.

And Anne told him.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DOWAGER'S ADVICE

IN the flush and wonder of her happiness Anne asked herself why she had been troubled by Gino's faults, why she had allowed herself to be touched by the wings of that cold spirit which considers and withholds, weighing things not by joy, but by a complex and insistent morality. With the wonderful cup brimming and glowing at her lips, why had she sought to temporize? She seemed to herself to be becoming simpler, closer to the elemental forces which are more alive in the old world than in that Puritan corner of the new to which she belonged.

Gino, in the realization of a happiness resolutely sought during what he persisted in considering the cruelly long period of two months, surrounded her by a love which was all that a woman could dream of, and more, Anne realized, than is the lot of many women to find. What Lady Fitz-Smith had said was true: Gino Curatulo was a born lover, and in loving as in nothing else came to the ultimate development of his nature.

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"It is an experience, my dear, to be loved by one of this sort of men. I hope you appreciate it," was the old cosmopolitan's remark when first seeing Anne after a private announcement of her engagement. No public announcement was to be made till after her father's consent to it.

"Never let him see you look at another man, or another man look at you, and you may be very happy. Don't attempt to have any life apart from him, or you will lose him. Keep him at home all you can, for the Italian at his best is a domestic creature. Don't take him too much into society, for the main business of the kind you are likely to see is intrigue, and it will only be a question of time till some woman tries to take him away from you. Do all these things, and you may be, as I said, very happy."

"It sounds," laughed Anne, "as though I were starting upon a rather more than usually perilous voyage, and you were supplying me with an abundance of charts, compasses, and ballast; but you have n't mentioned life-preservers."

"Divorce, since you are an American," said the Dowager, knitting rapidly.

"I trust Gino," said Anne, more gravely.

"That is all right, my dear, — and very proper, — but don't think he will trust you. In these respects

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the Latins are not a trusting people. But I like Gino," she added. "I always did. He is kind to old people, and sometimes he dances with the wall-flowers."

The Dowager gave what she felt to be important advice to Gino himself.

"Do not make the mistake of suggesting, or even mentioning, a money settlement," she admonished him. "Neither Anne nor her father would understand it, and he would suspect you of being mercenary. Americans, you know, have unusual ideas upon these subjects. Many of them will not endure the mention of money arrangements before a marriage. They consider that it argues a lack of disinterestedness, and cheapens the whole affair."

Gino listened attentively, and with some surprise. "But it is often for mutual protection that financial arrangements are made before a marriage," he said; "and once the business affairs are settled it is so much better, because they need never be mentioned again."

"Do as you like," said the Dowager, "but if you try to make money stipulations you will lose Anne. That is all there is to it. I have seen such things happen before. The Americans, though the most commercial of people, are in some ways the least mercenary and the most lavish in spending.

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They do not even show common sense in these matters and will pay millions for the possession of territory which is already theirs by right of conquest in war, and return the larger portion of an indemnity which has been granted them by a council of European nations. Such performances seem appallingly foolish to us, and it is almost certain that they will outgrow these generosities; but in the mean time let any man who wishes to marry one of their women—their best women, I mean—take care how he causes her to suspect that he approaches her for any purpose of financial gain.”

“Anne could not think such a thing, because she knows well how much I love her, and besides that, she has only a little more money than I have myself, which is not much. It seems to me proper and just that the man rather than the woman should have care of money, but it is certain that I love Anne too well to risk losing her for any such reason, and I will say nothing of the subject to herself or her father.”

“Good boy!” said the Dowager, with considerable approval; for she knew that such reticence was very unusual, marriage contracts in most European countries being considered as necessary as the wedding itself.

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Mrs. Garrison could not pretend to congratulate Anne. "I can't do anything but wish you all the happiness you expect," she said; "but you know how I feel."

"Yes, and so does Gino. Please be nice to him. He is very proud, and it would not take much to hurt his pride so that he would never speak to you again."

But even to Gino she would not pretend pleasure in the engagement.

"You know what I think of Anne," she told him. "Our New England girls make the finest women in the world, and the best wives."

Gino smiled radiantly and kissed her hand.

"I believe you, madame. And of me, of my poor self, you do not think so well?"

"You are a Latin."

"A 'naughty Latin'! That is how you think of me."

"Our countrymen have good reason to distrust those who come to us."

"Very true, madame, as we have good reason to distrust many Americans who come to us. Those like yourself and Anne come among us too rarely, as the best of our people too rarely go to you. You have too good reasons for thinking us fortune-hunters, deceitful, morally decayed, and on our side

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we find your people too often title-hunters, vulgarians, and scarcely more moral than you accuse us of being. You feel that the Italians are charming men, but outrageous husbands. Madame, do you think that, among us, Americans are considered to make good wives? Ah, no! no! Among many you will hear it said that the American woman is the worst of wives, that she has the smallest possible sense of family obligations. What are we to think of the vagrant American wife — the thousands of women who travel about Europe alone? They are vagrants as I have said, but usually honest, as we recognize to our stupefaction.”

“ Which, their vagrancy, or their honesty? ”

“ Both. While we may admire the morality of your women, we must detest the cold-heartedness that makes a good wife willing to endure separation from her husband merely for the sake of travel and diversion. Do you think such a thing could be in a well-ordered Italian home? Never! Do you think Anne shall ever leave me? But do not, I entreat you, madame, misunderstand me as criticising your own case. Do I not know that your husband is being followed, not left, and that it is in order to be on the same hemisphere as himself that you are temporarily expatriated? Have I not myself posted letters many and thick to African ports?

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But you must admit that your situation is not the usual one."

Margaret had blushed at the mention of her letters to Tom; and the helpless color on her fresh but middle-aged face delighted the Italian more than anything he had seen of her.

"Ah, madame!" he cried, "it would please me if you could like me as I like you."

"I do like you," said Margaret; "it is only as a husband for Anne that I —"

"Ah, those naughty foreign husbands! Wait, and you shall see. Happy nations, they say, have no history. The people who are in the newspapers, the notorious figures, are not the representative ones. I do not judge hastily by what I have seen of your people, and I only ask the same favor of you."

Mrs. Garrison, who was a person of few words, could never withhold her admiration for Gino's fluency, though she wondered if it were a good sign that a man should talk so much. On this occasion she changed her point of attack.

"I have an idea that you expect more obedience from a wife than our men do," she said. "But you must remember that Anne is not Italian, and will sometimes wish her own way."

"It will be my happiness always to give her her own way — when it is good for her."

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"But she will expect to decide when that is."

"We will decide together."

Margaret considered him thoughtfully.

"Do you know that we are beginning to leave the word 'obey' out of the marriage ceremony?" she asked.

"The subject does not concern me."

Gino's answer contained so many possible interpretations that Margaret let it pass unchallenged.

"If you try to coerce her you will not keep her," she said.

"You may trust me to keep her."

"Also you must not be too unreasonable too often. You were very silly about Jack Swift."

Gino's face stiffened.

"I do not wish to talk of that young man."

"Then I will talk of him"; and Mrs. Garrison explained that in the part of America which had been Anne's home the eternal preoccupation with love and sentimental adventure such as prevailed in Rome did not exist. The girls were more proud of their muscles than of their complexions, and if they went into the streets with their throats bare, it was more to show their physical power to resist cold than from coquetry. Boy and girl were brought up to work, to play, to fight together, as though there were only one sex and that one masculine.

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This normal familiarity destroyed all unwholesome sentiment, and made a certain degree of friendship possible without the interference of love.

To all of this the Italian listened with a feeling of stupefaction.

"I have heard something of these things, but I did not believe it possible," he said. "It disturbs me to think that Anne should have been subject to anything so uncivilized."

But Margaret was able to give him the assurance that beyond a certain point Anne had not been subject to it. She was not by temperament a "sport," and there were always people like her father who did not wish their daughters to associate freely with boys of their own age.

"How, then, do you pretend to account for her intimacy with this 'Jack,' who chooses the wing on her hat?" asked Gino suspiciously.

"That unfortunate wing!" laughed Mrs. Garrison. "I notice that she has never worn it since. Of course since Anne was fifteen or so she has been to dancing classes and house parties like her friends, and that meant walking and driving and canoeing with boys, and of course some of them have been in love with her. I have always felt that Jack was."

"I feel so, too. I have said it," cried Gino, with some excitement.

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“But what does it matter so long as she does not love him?”

“What does it matter that another loves the woman I love! Ah, madame, when will you understand?”

“Never, I fear,” answered Margaret. “And that is why I do not want you to marry Anne. There will be too much for her also to understand.”

CHAPTER XV

GINO AND ANNE

DURING the weeks that followed, Margaret was forced to admit that if mutual comprehension was desirable it was not necessary to happiness. Since admitting her love for Gino, Anne had walked with him and seen him alone as freely as though she were at home, and her face when she came home from these walks, or when her aunt would find her alone in the great salon after he had left her, was pale and luminous ; her eyes seemed to look without seeing, her ears to listen without hearing ; and her smile, radiant and vague, was as that of some absent spirit wishing in its happiness to be gracious to every living thing, but held apart within a mystical orbit of its own joy.

It was cold in early January. The Italian sun rose every morning to find frost covering the grounds and shrubs of Roman gardens, and in her many fountains there was ice ; but the sky was cloudless, and the snow-girded mountains on the north and west did little more than breathe over the Roman plains ; so that roses still bloomed on

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the walls of villa and palace, and, under the terrace that leads from the top of the famous stairway to the Pincio, iris blossomed hardily, and orange trees bore fruit and flowers in a warm, bright silence.

Anne walked there every morning with Gino near the hour of mid-day, when tourists and Romans alike go home for the European *déjeuner*. On the wide piazza of the Pincian Hill they would pause by a stone balustrade which is polished by the arms of multitudes who have leaned there; multitudes happy or unhappy as the case might be, but talking little, silenced, perhaps, into wistfulness as they look over the city and feel her grave and radiant charm, and think of the things that have made her glory and her piteousness.

Gino and Anne leaned there like the others, and looked over Rome and beyond, to the Monte Mario, where a famous villa, now silent and gray, stands among trees to which dead leaves cling through that brief mild time which is a Roman winter. Gino told her its history: how Raphael had built it, and great lords had lived in it for feasting and love, and intrigue. Now the plaster had fallen from its walls and arches, leaving them bare, gaunt, but still beautiful. He would take her there some day, he said, and show her the most

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beautiful stucco in the world and a fresco of rare and lovely design.

“ You cannot find anything like it out of Italy,” he told her. “ What Germany has done grotesquely and France brilliantly, Italy has done beautifully. Did you never notice the difference in passing from Italy to France? I will show you when we go together — how the villas change from the few quiet lines of our own to the gayety and coquetry of those beyond the frontier, to that *esprit vaudeville* of which a great Frenchman has spoken as characteristic of his people.”

“ France is the land of revelry, Italy is the land of reverie,” answered Anne, and then laughed, slipping her hand in his under cover of the muff that lay on the stone balustrade.

“ Dear,” she said, “ I sound as though I were beginning to write a book. It is your fault for making me see and feel so many things I did not see and feel before. I cannot understand why you have given up your own writing.”

“ I have told you it was because there was no longer any one to care whether I wrote or not.”

“ But now,” said Anne, “ there is some one who cares. I shall be ambitious for you, you will see. I shall want you to make much of yourself.”

“ I think that I can make much or little accord-

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ing as you want it," answered Gino. "But understand that, for me, I have no ambition beyond that of loving you and keeping warm and safe your love for me."

"It is safe," said Anne, her young face touched for a moment with gravity as of prescience. "My love for you is helplessly, perhaps pitifully, safe. Anger could not break it, Gino, nor jealousy, nor suspicion, as these things might break yours for me."

Gino told her that if she spoke so again he would kiss her blind and deaf where she stood; but Anne neither laughed nor blushed, nor did the gravity at once leave her face.

There were mornings when they walked in the Borghese Gardens. The wide avenues among the cypress and the ilex and the umbrella pines were bright and still — so bright, so still, that it was like a place in a dream, like a garden of enchantment, like a spot where, through a century of such mornings, the sleeping Princess lay. Among the gnarled trunks of the ilex, under their dense, small shining leaves, the shadow was magically deep and clear, and sunlight dropped through it as through still waters. Above the ilex, pines, high and motionless against the sky, stood in enchanted air.

To Anne the sense of some enchantment, of some divine magic laid on tree and wind, was always

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with her as she walked there these winter mornings; and she would pause, looking about her, her spirit caught and held by the strange beauty.

“What is it?” he asked her.

“I do not know — I do not know,” she answered, whispering.

Sometimes her rapt look would make him jealous, and once he drew her into a little temple that stood in the deepest of shadow, and making her sit on a marble bench, he knelt beside her on one knee, holding her hand to his lips and asking her what it was she felt that he did not share.

“There is nothing that you do not share,” she said.

Gino put his arms about her and bent her head backward on his shoulder till her eyes were under his.

“Swear it!”

“Dear,” she said; and then, after a pause, “Are not my eyes and lips sacrament enough?” And again, after another pause, “There is nothing in this world, or in what I can conceive of as the world to come, that has other meaning than you and our love,” she said.

“Puritan maiden,” he answered, “so slow to be won, so quiet where our women are violent, I did not know that you could love so well.”

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"Sometimes I fear I love you too well, Gino, too well!"

"Hush! Do you remember the evening when we stood by the fountain, and you had tortured me with the American!"

"Gino!"

"Hush, again! I have forgiven. We stood by the fountain and you let me suffer — you let me go without a word, without a tear. I said to myself then — she is cold."

"But there was some evil thing in you that night. If I had sobbed, and protested, and dragged myself at your feet as your women might have done, you would not have believed me."

"It is possible," he admitted, "that I should not. There was too much evidence."

"My boy! My boy!" she cried, taking his head between her hands; and she laughed though she felt more near to tears; "will my whole life of fidelity and love be enough to cast out these demons? Or will they break my heart before my life has had time to cast them out?"

"You speak as though I were unreasonable," said Gino.

"You are so unreasonable that we have no more a word or a thought in common when you do not trust my love."

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“‘Trust’ is a good word,” he answered, “but ‘knowledge’ is a better one. If I do not know, I do not trust, and how can one know while man is man and woman is woman?”

“Then you do not trust me.”

“I trust you as I have never trusted woman before, and this is the truth as God sees it,” he answered, in the grave and vibrating tones she loved to hear.

“But if something forced us to separate for a few months, and you knew that living near me was a man, such a man as women love easily — what then?”

“Let us not talk of such horrid chances,” he said, rising. “Come away. It is cold.”

But she detained him with a hand on his arm.

“If you think I am to be doubted, what then am I to think of you?”

“I do not care, so long as you love me.”

“Gino! What you are saying is horrible to me.”

He looked down at her for a few moments in silence, and then he spoke with some sternness.

“You know nothing of life,” he said. “You juggle with the words ‘trust’ and ‘fidelity.’ Listen, and understand me. Speaking broadly, I do not believe that the virtue of any woman, or the honor

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of any man, can stand more than a certain amount of temptation. The man or woman who makes such a boast is a hypocrite or deluded. I know the world, I have seen what I have seen. The facts are there though one may turn away from them; and, because they seem 'horrible,' say they are not true."

She listened with her forehead bent on the hand that held his arm, nor did she lift it when he ceased speaking.

"Child," he continued more tenderly, as he touched her hair, "I do not like speaking to you so of such things; but you must learn to understand the torture you can put me to, and to guard against the men who may try to take your love from me. Look up, sweetheart."

Anne looked up, and Gino, who had expected to see tears on her face, was surprised by the steady eyes that met his.

"What am I then to think about the woman who may try to take your love away from me?" she asked.

"You may think that you need not fear her so long as you give me no cause to doubt yourself."

She still looked at him steadily.

"And if you doubted me—"

"Never give me cause."

"But if —"

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“Why do you say such things? If you were not true to me, I think I could never be happy again. But there are women in the world with whom I could amuse myself, and I should seek — amusement.”

As he spoke his heavy eyes regarded her through half-closed lids with the alien and guarded expression she remembered on the day at the Tre Fontane; and as she sprang to cover those eyes with her hands, he caught her in his arms.

“Why do you torture me with such an ‘if’?” he cried. “Why do you speak such words when you know my love for you — when you know all my life, my happiness, my ambition, is in you only? There is only one happiness in this world, and that is the happiness of love. Another world I do not believe in, so you are everything to me. Why do you speak of betrayal?”

“Only to see if you believed it possible. I cannot conceive of love without perfect trust.”

“Child! child! You do not know man — or woman. In this world one can believe nothing but the moment. The moment is ours. Let us take it.”

And her mind and sense became helpless under his kisses.

But Anne realized that love was not the thing she had dreamed of. Touched by a violence such as

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she had never imagined, it lacked the element of absolute trustfulness, without which she could not have conceived it. Instead of a thing fixed and steadfast as the movement of stars, and in some mystical sense as inevitable, as much rooted in cosmic forces as they, she felt the love between Gino and herself to be a thing wonderfully, magically sweet, but snatched from an unstable world to be guarded through ecstasy and peril.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ITALIAN MOTHER

THERE came a day when he took her to see his mother, and Anne prepared for the visit with some anxiety.

“ Will she find it hard to forgive me for being a foreigner, and in what dress do you think she would like me best ? ” she asked.

Gino reassured her by saying that his mother would like her in anything, and that the Romans as a whole did not have the instinctive dislike of strangers that one finds among the French.

When he came to take Mrs. Garrison and her niece to call upon the Italian woman, the older woman was prostrated by a headache, and rather than disappoint his mother, whom he knew to be waiting for them at that very moment in all the state of a dress specially prepared for the occasion, Gino decided to take Anne alone, contrary to the Italian custom.

Anne never forgot that visit. It was her first intimate view of a Roman interior as occupied by a person of moderate income ; and the misery of its

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chill and rigid discomfort remained in her mind connected with her first view of the Italian mother, a lady very thin and long, with long, curved nose and the long narrow cheeks which belong to a certain Italian type. She seemed shy, and her bearing, like her few words of the French she evidently desired to speak, was awkward and uncertain. If it were true that she would love the woman who was beloved by her son, it was evident that for the moment she either could not or would not give her anything in the way of response. Fortunately the American could not guess the Roman mother's dismay that this young girl who was to marry her son should call upon her attended by him alone ; and in fact Gino never could have brought her in such a way if his mother had been one of Rome's great ladies. To Anne, the signora seemed part of the deadly chill of the room, and she looked wistfully at the empty grate while the Italian woman explained that when she lit a fire she took a cold.

"*Mama mia,*" said Gino, who was walking about the room, " Anne will think you are laughing, because in America they light fires in order *not* to take cold. Even here in Rome she lights fires every day. Sometimes I suffer there from the heat, and always I move to a distant part of the room."

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“But why,” asked Anne, “did you never speak?”

“Because I have very good manners, thanks to this *mama* of mine”; and he kissed his mother’s hand, still holding it, while Anne wondered at the affectionate homage, so different from anything offered by independent youth to the mothers of her own land. Still shivering in her furs, she felt that the only way to endure a winter in such rooms was to remain in bed during such hours of the day as one was not out walking; but this Italian woman had rarely gone out, winter or summer, since the death of her husband ten years ago.

From what Gino had told her of the marriage, it had been one of those common enough among a certain class of Italians, but rare in her own country. The husband had no business to take him from home and no wish but to stay in it, and share the smallest daily interest with his wife. Some years had passed without occupation or event other than the birth and death of children, and whether or not there had been that infidelity on the man’s part of which Americans are so quick to suspect the Latins, nothing had ever occurred serious enough to disturb the love of the married couple — a love which kept intensity and color up to the moment of the husband’s death.

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While Gino still held his mother's hand and played with her fingers, Anne still shivering in her furs spoke to him in English, telling him to go away for a short time, for his mother and herself could come to a quicker understanding if they were alone.

"*Bene ! Bene !*" answered Gino, good-naturedly translating her request into Italian. " I will go and walk for half an hour. Perhaps you would like to abuse me."

Anne was not sure that the Signora Curatulo understood his pleasantry ; and if she had realized the Italian woman's bewilderment at a girl's freedom in walking alone with the man she was only engaged to, and coming alone with him to call upon his mother, she would have been even more discouraged in her efforts to draw near to the one person in the world besides herself whom Gino professed to love. In Italy only the little bourgeoisie were allowed such freedom ; and the signora had not mixed enough with the fashionable world of Rome to have learned philosophy while looking upon the eccentricities of this rather wild young race from over the sea. Gino had explained that in America, as in England, the very best people had freedom in these respects, but his mother remained bewildered.

When the two women were alone Anne turned

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to the Signora Curatulo with a desperate eagerness, and spoke to her for the first time in Italian.

“ Will you try to love me ? ” she said, with tears in her eyes. “ Will you try to love me, because we both love him better than anything else in the world ? ”

The warmth and sincerity of her words overcame whatever existed of shyness or disappointment in the Italian mother's feelings toward the stranger her son had brought home as his bride, and almost immediately she had the girl in her arms.

The rest of the interview moved between laughter and tears ; but the tears predominated, for the Signora Curatulo was a person who lived with the thought of her dead husband. No interest from the world outside came between her and grief, and her nature seemed at once too constant and too limited, too lacking in luxuriance, to grow new life where the fire had seared. Anne was shown the room of Gino's father, which, owing to his widow's insistence, had never been changed in the smallest detail since his death. His pipe, his cap, his cane, lay where he had last put them, and Anne guessed that before these relics the widow stood daily to mourn her loss while she renewed the sense of its presence. The girl was silent ; wonder, less touched with reverence than she could have wished, possessed her.

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She was eager to love and understand all that concerned Gino, but she could not love or understand this cherishing of grief. The deadly word "sentimental" slipped into her consciousness, and unwillingly she remembered a burlesque of Dickens's about a wedding-cake uneaten, a wedding-dress worn for a lifetime after a bridegroom's disappearance.

In her anxiety not to misunderstand or unjustly condemn any Latin characteristics, Anne was able to realize that from their point of view her own might appear cold-hearted; so she strove not to be alienated by the mortuary chamber, and soon the widow's attention turned happily to details of her son's childhood. Anne was shown pictures of him from his first years to the present time, and told of his earliest traits of character and temper. It was while they were engaged in this occupation, equally interesting to both, that Gino returned.

"You see!" exclaimed Anne radiantly, "I told you we should be friends if you left us alone. We have talked about you when you were a baby, and she has promised to love me."

Anne wished to atone by her manner for any secret disloyalty of thought, and she was in fact touched by the Italian woman's gentleness of nature and the sincerity of her affections. It was evident

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that an extreme domesticity, an almost exaggerated love of her family, were the pivots upon which her life moved.

At parting, the Signora Curatulo kissed the American girl, and called her daughter, and said she already loved her very much. Looking into her eyes she said how happy her husband would have been to welcome such a daughter, and wept, and kissed her again, still weeping, so that Gino patted her on the shoulder, saying: "There, there, *mama*, this is not a day for sad thoughts!" Whereupon she obediently dried her eyes, and they parted happily.

"You did not tell me she was so sad," said Anne, as they came out into the air again.

"She has never recovered from the death of my dear father," answered Gino.

"But can we not make her happier? Can we not take her out to the gardens, to the theatre, or to hear the music in the Pincio?"

"I have suggested and implored for these things," said Gino, "but she cannot endure the thought of pleasure which he does not share. What will you? Women are like that!"

CHAPTER XVII

JACK IN THE CRIMSON SALON

IT was just while Gino and Anne were planning for an early autumn marriage and drawing together in a community of domestic detail which was very dear to both of them, that Jack Swift returned. It was snowing when he arrived, and he found the city almost paralyzed by the occurrence, though it was not cold, and the woolly flakes fell quietly, finishing a brief and sloppy existence upon the pavement.

The American, seeking various modes of transport, and failing to find either tram-car or carriage that could face the storm, made his way eventually on his feet through the labyrinthine streets that led to Anne. It was early in the afternoon, and he found her alone in the large and beautiful rooms which had so unexpectedly become to her the one place in the world which meant home.

She was unfeignedly surprised and pleased to see him.

“But what brings you to Rome?” she asked.

“You,” answered Jack bluntly, “though not in

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the way I should prefer you to bring me. I came up from Naples this morning, and I say, Anne, what is the matter with this city of yours — for I believe it is to be yours? There is n't a thing moving, from a tram-car to a dog. Even telephones are out of order. Is it the plague, or the snow?"

"Snow!" answered the girl. "Is n't it funny, Jack, when one thinks of our blizzards, with a savage cold, and the wind hurtling about in the frozen air above till it seems as though the Valkyrie maidens were riding there shouting and clashing their shields, while down below the snow drifts are six feet high, and every man is down-town at his office by half-past nine."

"Don't speak of it," said Jack; "it makes a fellow want it too much."

He looked about him at the spacious crimson room with its old ivories and its Van Dyke portrait, then up at the windows against which stood the naked trees with snowflakes dropping idly through them, melting as they dropped. He looked long and with inscrutable blue eyes into the quiet and melancholy courtyard where the fountain stood, and the crumbling statue, and the ancient trees, all inclosed by cold gray palace walls.

Anne watched him, smiling unconsciously be-

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cause she had forgotten how blue his eyes were, or how fair his skin under its strong tan. Neither did she remember how tall he was, and lean, nor the impression of competence and careless strength one received from his personality. It pleased her, while it seemed to belong to a time which had been lived by another being than the Anne Warren about to marry a Roman.

"They do some things here in a way we can't," he said at last, turning back to the room and Anne.

"I am glad you admit that much," she answered tranquilly.

"I am glad that we can't," continued Jack. "This sort of thing — this dignity and beauty with its suggestiveness of leisure — belongs to a civilization completed. I would rather belong to one in the making."

"I am going to belong to one in the making," retorted Anne. "Young Italy is in the making as much, even more, than the United States. But young Italy has such a rich and splendid background! Our background is thin, Jack, — indeed, we have n't any to speak of."

"But what we can speak of is as fine as any in the world."

"Yes," said Anne, adding thoughtfully, "I am

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not sure that I don't like what we were better than what we are. In our beginnings we stood at least for a national ideal, for definite and heroic aims. Now we are not even sure that Americans are making America, and sometimes our civilization seems an overgrown, scrambling, rattling thing, which may turn out something glorious and may — ”

“ End as a roaring farce,” finished Jack, as she hesitated for an expression. “ If I thought your lack of patriotism worth arguing with, I would say that it's in any case a magnificent throw of the dice, and I thank what gods there be that they gave me a hand in the game.”

Anne nodded understandingly. “ I know,” she said ; “ it's a fight, and you always loved fighting, Jack.”

“ Which is fortunate,” he said, “ because I've got the fight of my life on just now.”

Deep down in her being the girl was startled by something strange in the steady eyes that looked into hers. But the start was so deep as to be almost unconscious, and remembered unwillingly afterwards more clearly than perceived at the time, though it brought a faint slow-growing color to her face, and when she felt its warmth she was slightly bewildered and ill at ease. But the old familiar

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Jack was there before her a minute later with nothing strange or startling about him.

"Of course," he was saying, "I understand that you decry your own country in order 'to annoy,' like the baby who cried in 'Alice in Wonderland,' and possibly also as a sort of rattle of musketry in defiance of what you suspect to be my violent disapproval of your engagement."

Anne admitted the charges willingly. "And I love America, and would n't have been born anything but an American if I had been given choice in the matter," she said, "though I am proud that I am going to marry an Italian."

"'Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,'"

quoted Jack.

She laughed, and called him a "foolish, insular old Jack."

"Your engagement is the worst and most desperate kind of a mistake," he said, "but this is not what I came to Rome to tell you. I came to tell you that so far as the practical side of it goes it's all right. Your father cabled me a month ago to find out everything there was to find out about Curatulo, and I wrote him the result, and he cabled me this reply."

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He handed her a crumpled paper on which she read: "Tell Anne she can announce engagement. Am writing her."

"Your report was evidently satisfactory," remarked Anne, as she returned the message.

"Your father not being a woman, or an idealist — it was," answered Jack dryly. "So far as can be learned, there does n't seem any more reason for you not marrying him than for not marrying most of us, except that he will make you unhappy."

Anne, leaning on her elbow, settled her chin in the palm of her hand, and smiled at Jack.

"His mother's mother was a Colonna, and his father's people have been wealthy and respectable for generations. So his family is good enough, though they lost all their money in the great building epidemic, — so Curatulo himself is not as wealthy, nor, being popular among very 'smart' people, is he perhaps quite as respectable as his father."

"Please, Jack, do not speak of him to me without remembering that I am going to marry him," said the girl.

"I don't feel that I am likely to forget that," answered Jack Swift.

"Then try to speak as though you did not."

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Jack rose. "I think I must be going," he said.

"But you have only just come."

"I only came to 'just come.' I must get back to Naples to-night, for the family of my charge are off again to-morrow. I ran up to give you this message, and to ask you a question. I have n't asked the question yet."

"What is it?" asked Anne gravely, as she stood before him.

"Are you sure this is the real thing with you?"

Anne paused, not in doubt, but as though to allow the joy of her confidence to gather itself into complete fullness of expression on her face. She did not flush, but grew a little pale, and finally her lips parted in a small, slow smile.

Jack turned away. There was that in the white face and the pallid, breathless smile which gave him his answer.

"I suppose it was a silly question for a fellow to ask," he said, "but I wanted to come up and see for myself if everything was all right."

"Everything is all right, Jack."

"Then I had better be going," said he, and with an inexpressive handshake he left her. An impression of his careless and forceful personality remained rather curiously in the room he had passed from, and suddenly Anne seemed to see again his

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eyes as they had looked into hers when he spoke of the fight which was the one of his life.

What had the eyes meant? Was it possible that Jack —? She caught back the words before they had formed themselves; but their meaning dwelt unwillingly in her consciousness.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ITALIAN SON

THERE were times when Gino's sweetness and childlikeness made the sense of danger in his love seem grotesque, and in February something happened which bound them together with a closeness which though sad was precious and secure.

One evening he arrived a little late and apologized for being still in his afternoon clothes.

"*Mama* is not well," he explained, "and I could not leave her a moment before I came to you."

Anne drew him to the sofa beside her.

"I can see that you are anxious," she said. "Is she actually ill?"

"Only a cold. The doctor says there is nothing to fear — but I fear," he added, after a slight pause.

That evening he was especially quiet and gentle, talking with her much about practical arrangements for their future together. With her money and his they would not be very rich, but they would have enough to live comfortably in Italy, and occupy an

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apartment to themselves under that belonging to his mother.

"I want to be very near," he said, "for she will be lonely at first when I leave"; and he told her how much his mother depended for life upon his life. Never, he said, did he come home too late at night to find her awake and waiting for him, eager for an account of his day.

"That would be rare in America," said Anne. "Our men do not *seem* to love their mothers like that."

"They do not, from our point of view, seem to love their mothers at all," answered Gino. "Nor do the American husbands seem to love their wives, when they allow them to go for months and months away to other countries, to visit mountains and churches and talk with strangers in the salons of great hotels. That is not love as we understand it. That is not married happiness as we mean happiness. Do you think I shall ever allow you to leave me?" He kissed her hand as he held it. "Do you think I shall ever allow anything to separate us, my own dear one — my life?"

Anne was always thoughtful when he made criticisms of her own people. Accustomed from the time she could remember to criticisms of his, to an easy assumption that Latin races could only be

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spoken of with contempt, the perception that from their point of view the Anglo-Saxon was usually a cold-hearted barbarian, first amazed and then amused her. She sometimes wished she might see Jack and tell him of these things. Would they penetrate the hide of his racial complacency?

Gino left her early on that evening, with the agreement that if she heard nothing from him in the morning she should take her maid and go to his mother's apartment, unless her aunt was able to send the automobile.

It was Gino who insisted upon her being accompanied.

"You are too young and lovely to be alone in these streets. A man might address you in a way I cannot endure to think of. You will bring a maid?"

Anne laughed and promised; "though I think it is ridiculous," she said. In order to please him she had been obliged to forego her American independence, and, like an Italian girl, never go into the streets unaccompanied, though she saw him alone as freely as though she had been in America.

The next morning there was no word from Gino, and Anne prevailed upon Mrs. Garrison to go with her in the automobile.

"A woman of his mother's age who has not been

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out for ten years might die very quickly," observed the older woman during the course of the ride.

"Don't speak of it," said Anne; "Gino would be inconsolable."

"Why does he call her '*mama*'?" asked the older woman. "It seems ridiculous for a grown man to call his mother by such a puerile name as '*mama*.' I could believe in the depth of his feeling more easily if he called her something else."

"But, Aunt Margaret, that is Italian!"

"Thank Heaven it is not English!"

Anne patted her hand in affectionate protest.

"You are still cross about it," she said.

"I am still unhappy about it."

"You must admit that he is n't any of the things you imagined."

"What did I imagine?"

"You thought he wanted me for my fortune till you knew he knew I had none. You know he is not mysterious and strange, but more domestic than any man you have ever seen. You know that he is dearly and eagerly sympathetic about the little things of every-day life. You know that your own son would not have been more concerned when the shopman gave you the wrong worsted, or have spent so many hours trying to get it right. And you know that this is not because he is trying to

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propitiate you, but because he is Italian. They are like that: more childlike in their eagerness to help and serve than it is possible for our men to be."

"I never thought," said Mrs. Garrison, in a low voice, "that you could love a man who would tell a lie so easily, and have so little if any moral principle."

"It is true," said Anne, "that he will say things which are not so, but his nature is honest — he will not hide his principles or characteristics even when he knows that they are of the kind which I most disapprove, and which might turn me from him. As for the moral ideal," she continued with some hardihood, "we speak as if there were but one kind, and are too ready to assume that our own men possess it in superior quantity."

Arrived at the sombre Roman palace where Gino and his mother lived, the Americans mounted the stone flights of stairs in silence, though Margaret shook her head over their chill and darkness. "What a place for my Anne to live!" she thought; for most Roman entrances still seemed to her depressing and squalid. Waiting in the chilly salon, with its curiously lifeless furniture and ornaments standing rigidly in the dark and heavy air, she complained again. "Will the man expect Anne to live in a room like this?" she asked herself.

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When Gino appeared it was without a smile. He kissed the older woman's hand mechanically, and then sat by Anne, who put her hand over his regardless of her aunt's presence.

"She is worse!" said Mrs. Garrison; while Anne was silent with her eyes on Gino's face.

"She could not sleep last night. The doctor says pneumonia," he answered lifelessly.

"In this apartment!" exclaimed Mrs. Garrison, looking about her. "I hope there is a fire in her bedroom."

"There is an American stove lit in the hall just outside her door," said Gino, looking down at Anne's hand.

"It is n't enough. It can't be enough," protested the older woman. "Of course," she continued, "now that she is ill you must have a telephone put in."

"It would take three months," said Gino, without lifting his eyes.

"Three months!" said Margaret. "But surely in case of illness — Why, at home in an emergency we can have one in a day."

"It would take three months," repeated Gino monotonously.

Mrs. Garrison looked about her again with a helpless expression.

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"What a city!" she murmured.

Suddenly Gino lifted dry and miserable eyes to Anne's face.

"She will die," he said; "I know that she will die."

"Hush! my dear, my dear!" said the girl.

Mrs. Garrison asked herself silently what else any sick person could do in such an atmosphere and in such a city. Aloud, she ordered Gino to consider her automobile at his disposal during his mother's illness. It might be needed to bring the doctor in a hurry, or send for nurses or medicine. "Have you more than one nurse?" she asked.

"We have none. It has been impossible up to this moment to get one."

"No nurse!" Mrs. Garrison was rising to climaxes of dismay. "In a large city like this no nurse to be had!"

"It is Sunday, and St. Somebody's day. The convent nurses are at mass," said Gino, with unutterable contempt in his voice. "If she dies the church shall pay me for this," he added fiercely.

"But the doctor—if he is the right sort of a doctor he would certainly have been able to get you some one before now."

"He is the best doctor in Rome," answered Gino resentfully. "All night he has been working,

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and this morning he met me with tears in his eyes because of his failure to send me some one."

Mrs. Garrison's mental comment upon such effeminacy was one of continued resentment and scorn.

"Of course," she thought, "there is nothing for the poor lady to do but to die, and the sooner the better. With a body that has been kept indoors for ten years because of grief, in rooms that are as cold and damp as tombs, in a city where nurses think more of their prayers than their patients, and in the charge of a doctor who weeps, — what chance has she of getting well? What chance will Anne have when her day comes?"

Some days later Margaret saw the doctor, — a small man, alert and vigorous, with the dark warm skin and the dark expressive eyes of his race. Vigor, warmth, and expressiveness dominated his personality, which even Margaret could not accuse of effeminacy. He had known the Signora Curatulo all his life and tended her husband in his last illness; but Mrs. Garrison could neither forgive nor understand the tears in his eyes.

On hearing of the failure to get a nurse Anne made no comment, but took off her furs.

"You must let me stay. I will nurse her until you get some one," she said.

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"Sweetheart, no ! It is like your dear self to suggest it, but your presence in her room might excite her, and even now I expect some one from the Anglo-American Home. Pia and I will watch till she comes."

"Then you must go back to her at once."

Mrs. Garrison and Anne rose.

"We will come again this afternoon," said Anne, "and Gino, I shall give up the reception at the Salvators' and stay at home on the possible chance of your being able to come to me for a short time this evening. It will be better for you to get some fresh air before night."

"I dare not hope it," he answered. But that evening early he was announced, and came in looking as a man must look who has not slept or changed his clothes for twenty-four hours.

"There is no change," he said. "She is no worse. The doctor is with her, and the nurse. They sent me to rest, for she seemed to sleep, and I came here."

He sat by Anne, as in the morning, and looked at the carpet with what seemed a miserable apathy.

"She does not suffer," he said, after a pause.

Mrs. Garrison rose and left the room without speaking, but even then he did not move.

"She will die," he added in the same tone.

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Anne, save with a few broken words of tenderness, did not seek to interrupt his silence, and for nearly half an hour he sat without speaking, keeping her hand in his, and now and then holding it to his lips, as though it were a draught of comfort to him.

Once he broke out fiercely against the priests whom he hated, as so many of the young Romans do.

“They shall not have her,” he cried, “unless they walk over my body. When my father lay dying one of them came to the house wishing to hear his confession and give him absolution. Confess what? My father — a good and brave man against whom no word had ever been spoken. And receive absolution from whom? from a knave! a reprobate! who took a girl from the man she was to marry and kept her for years till he grew tired of her and turned her into the street. ‘Father,’ I said, ‘do you wish this priest or any other to give you the consolations of the church?’ ‘They are consolations which I have lived without, and can well die without,’ he said.

“I told the priest to go, but he would not, for he was hoping to frighten my mother into the church. Then I took him by his greasy collar and I walked him out the door, and told him if he came again

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I should do worse. After that my father opened his eyes once more. 'Promise me, Gino,' he said, 'that when I become unconscious you will not let the women permit any priest to commit his mummeries over me.' And I promised. Only once again did he speak, and I could scarcely hear, but I think he asked me to see that when he was gone the priests did not get my mother. Then he died without fear, as he had lived."

Gino's denunciation was vivid and spirited. His voice and rapid gestures expressed the flame-like ardor of his race, which in his case, as in that of the Italian aristocrat, is usually trained to an external quiet, tending to make the high-born Roman a scarcely more expressive creature than ourselves.

"I did not know you hated the priests so much," said Anne.

"We hate them because we know them."

After that he did not speak again, but in their silence Anne felt near to him as she had never felt before.

"I must go," he said at last. "To-morrow night she may not be here." And he took Anne in his arms, kissing her with none of the violence which had sometimes troubled her, but gently, more with the tenderness of love than the passion of it. She took his head in her hands as though it had been

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that of a dearly-loved child, and felt the last traces of strangeness and misunderstanding fall away from between them.

The next day Signora Curatulo was worse, and the following night she fulfilled Margaret's prophecy and died.

Mrs. Garrison was not sure that Gino's grief could be characterized as the shallow and easy emotion with which the Anglo-Saxon is so quick to credit the Latin, though she told herself that it was probably a feeling that would not last. Anne had no such doubts. She was growing to feel contempt for the narrow-visioned and unjust criticism of nation for nation, and when Gino with his head on her knee sobbed out his grief, she saw in him only those powers of love and devotion which are the exquisite charm of his race.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE BOSCA SACRA

THE little snowstorm that had signaled Jack Swift's arrival in Rome was the winter's last serious effort at survival. In mid-February fruit trees blossomed on the Campagna in warm moist air, and very soon there were violets growing within the tomb of Cecilia Matella and in the quiet cypress-guarded fields among the ruins that had once been the halls of Hadrian's Villa. Birds with strange rapturous notes sang in the Roman gardens. The chill fled away from under the ilex trees, and Anne, walking with Gino in the *Giardini Borghese*, remembered how she had walked there alone during the last warm days of autumn, thinking that this garden was made for men and women who love each other, and wondering wistfully, half ashamed of her wistfulness and wonder, why, in such a time and place, she also did not love.

A letter from Mr. Warren to his daughter soon confirmed the cable sent to Jack. The engagement could be announced immediately, but in the early spring Anne must return to her own country and

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spend the summer there. If during that time her feelings underwent no change, her father would go with her to Italy in September, and “look over” Curatulo. He, Mr. Warren, had no doubt but that he should like him immensely. A race of men who had made the *Risorgimento* were capable of the finest sort of qualities, and he doubted not that Anne would be as safe with one of them as with a husband of her own race. All the same, it was well to be careful with the unknown, which was why he required a summer of waiting of her. In the autumn he would sail for Italy prepared to pass the winter there, — report spoke of good golf links near Rome, — and if Anne wished, she could be married as early in the winter as she liked. It seemed more sensible than putting them all to the expense of another trip across the ocean. With regard to the expense, he feared he would be unable to give his daughter a larger allowance than he did at present; but with her mother’s money and what Curatulo had himself there would be enough, and as long as Curatulo did not exact anything more all would be well.

He went on to say that one or two of his friends had expressed surprise that an Italian should remain content with any such financial arrangement. They were nearly always mercenary, etc. “Which only

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shows," continued Mr. Warren, "the silliness of our racial prejudice. For my part I am well content to have you marry out of your own country, and though I have yet decided nothing I am thinking seriously of settling in Europe. The life there suits me better. A man may be idle in the Old World without being also disgraced. Indeed 'idleness' is considered rather as leisure, and some one has said that only the finest order of mind is capable of enjoying leisure."

Anne read this characteristic letter without enthusiasm. She had long ago recognized her father as a futile, self-indulgent person, whose mode of living could not command her respect; but in reading the letter to Gino she forebore to criticise it, knowing that to do so would cause her to appear unwomanly and irreverent in his sight.

The required summer of separation looked an abyss of misery to both of them, but Gino did not urge her to disobey, for a daughter's obedience to her father was one of the requisitions on his calendar of virtues.

"But it will be a dreadful time," he said. "How am I to bear the thought of my dear Anne on the other side of the water among God knows how many 'Jacks.'"

Mrs. Garrison approved of her brother's de-

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mand for time, which was the result of her own suggestion.

"It is one of the few sensible things I ever knew Henry to do. What a pity it is that it will not do any good!" she exclaimed. For some instinct warned her that the love of Anne and Curatulo would hold.

Lady Fitz-Smith nodded her head approvingly when told of the news. "It will give the girl time," she said; but added, much as Mrs. Garrison had done, "though it will probably not change things in the least, for any one can see it is the *grande passion* with both of them."

"Six months will be nothing to Anne," said Mrs. Garrison; "but can he be trusted to wait?"

"I think so," said the Englishwoman easily, as she paused to count the stitches on the sleeve of her fourth gray jacket. "Italians *can* be faithful, though I would n't have thought it years ago. If he were thrown with a charming woman or two during Anne's absence, he might — well — find her charming — you could not tell — but it would only be superficial. He would be Anne's again the moment she came back to him."

"It is terrible," said Mrs. Garrison, "to think of marrying a man with whom there could be such a 'might.'"

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“Dear Mrs. Garrison, you always interest me so much when you talk of the standards of your own men —”

“The Anglo-Saxon man —” corrected Margaret.

“The Anglo-Saxon man — our men, then. Do you really have such confidence in them that you would trust them not even to find another woman charming under such circumstances as I have described?”

“They might *know* that she was charming. I should be sorry to think the best type of man would *feel* her to be so.”

The click of Lady Fitz-Smith’s needles was that lady’s only answer.

Owing to the death of his mother, Gino lived away from the fashionable world which knew him so well, and Anne gave up all large entertainments also, as a matter of course.

In this way the days were their own, and they saw each other with a freedom which astounded even those Romans who were used to the ways of strangers; for Gino was Italian and one of themselves, who understood the proprieties of such matters.

It was, in fact, Gino himself who put what restraint there was upon their movements, and tried

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to make solitary excursions as rare and inconspicuous as possible. Now that they were openly engaged with her father's consent, the American girl thought it foolish to conceal their presence in a church or gallery from any friends who might be there, and to slip under the protection of a doorway or ruined wall rather than be discovered by any one who might be visiting the villas or gardens outside of Rome at the same time as themselves.

This question of discretion was the first upon which Mrs. Garrison and Curatulo found themselves in agreement, and in the eyes of the older woman Gino's self-restraint and the sacrifice of what she knew to be his ardent personal wishes were not the smallest of points she was obliged to concede to his advantage.

Anne protested that she did not like secrecy, and that if she must make a secret of such things as an afternoon excursion to the Villa Madama, for instance, she would rather not go at all.

But Gino, confident in his ability to have his own way, announced tranquilly that they would start the next day, that he would call for her in the early afternoon, and that she need not wear her brightest dress or her largest hat, so that people who crossed the Ponte Molle would know who she was.

"And even so," he added, "we must not do such a

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thing often. Only one more excursion must we make alone, and that will be to the Bosca Sacra, where I have longed to take you ever since I first looked into your dear eyes. Otherwise we will be discreet, and only walk alone in the morning, for I cannot endure that the world should think ill of my Anne."

"But the world knows that we are honorably engaged to be married."

Gino raised her hand to his lips, but he did not answer; and suddenly realizing the significance of his silence, she blushed hotly, and would have drawn her hand away, but that he held it firmly.

"Sweetheart," he said, "to you who are so pure and loyal, one does not like to say some things; but the time will come when you will learn why the world can never 'know' that things are 'honorable' between a man and woman."

"I have learned enough already," she said in a voice of displeasure. "I have learned enough to sometimes hate a civilization like this of yours."

Gino looked into her face, worshiping her for the flush of shame and anger that was upon it; worshiping her also — even while he was amused — for her entire assurance of the chastity and honor of that far-off civilization in which she had been born, and lived. He allowed his eyes to show

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his worship, though he guarded his amusement, and was very gentle with her during the short time that she remained irritated, seeming to hold him to blame in some way for the cynicism of the Old World.

She went with him the next day in her aunt's automobile to visit the Villa Madama, as he had asked her to do, and every morning they continued to meet among the flower-booths at the foot of the Spanish steps, where he bought her flowers before walking with her up the lovely terraces of sun-burned stone.

One day they went out to the Bosca Sacra, an expedition which Gino had first spoken of on the day when they stood watching a mass at St. Peter's. Margaret had again lent them her limousine, and this afternoon, as on many others, it was fragrant with flowers Gino had brought to fill the glass vase that was fixed between two windows. They passed by the Colosseum, and then through the Appian Way, where life was swarming between the high walls.

"There is too much wall," said Gino; "I long to see beyond over those plains to the mountains where I so often used to long to stand and look with you, thinking that if you could once see that mystery and beauty by my side you would learn

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something suddenly of the possibility of life and love."

"I did not need the plains to teach me," answered Anne. She was wearing his violets in her dress, and the slightly thin face above them was like a flower in its fairness and its flush.

They left the road that leads straight to the hills and the Castelli Romani, and turned into a lane where there are no walls at all and the Campagna stretches on every side. At a farmhouse they got out of the car and walked over the grass down a little valley and up again to the grove, the Bosca Sacra, a little group of ilex that stand closely together in the midst of treeless plains. A goddess visited the grove once, and artists love to paint it, and a few who know it love to visit it; but they are very few. The ancient tree-trunks seemed of strange wild shapes to the American girl, as are so many forms in southern lands of romance and passion. It was easy to imagine that a goddess had visited it, and she told Gino so while they stood in the stillness of a dense shade, and just before turning to look out over the Campagna, a shadowless world of a beauty and mystery which there seem no words to tell of. Anne looked into the wide silent spaces where the pride of empires had once sounded and passed, and where only broken

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arches and fallen walls remain to tell of their passing. Beyond the plains were the mountains, and above them hung the clouds, "high pinnacled against the blue."

Anne looked without speaking, and tears born of an immeasurable nostalgia came to her eyes. By her side stood Gino, motionless and silent also.

Since his mother's death he was graver, and even more gentle and tender with Anne than he had been before, more exquisitely thoughtful of her smallest wish; so, though they had loved each other well, they seemed now to discover day by day new moods and ways of love. Here, in the midst of this desolate loveliness, she felt that because of her love, life had become a poignant and immeasurable thing, and she shared this thought with Gino, knowing that he would understand as far as it is given one person to understand another.

"When you say that life need have no other occupation than that of loving, you say what is true," she told him a little later, turning deep and radiant eyes upon him. "Love has its own events, its own adventures, — life needs no other. But oh, Gino, love is so great and terrible that one might fear it. It is greater than we. It could hurt beyond our power to endure. Does it never make you afraid?"

He caught her in his arms, crying hardily that

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he feared nothing. And in spite of her words she now lifted her lips fearlessly to meet his, and he knew that if a girl had loved him once, a woman loved him now, and a woman of whose love no man could ever ask more than it could yield.

CHAPTER XX

THE QUARREL

ONE day a letter came from Jack, and Gino was with Anne when the butler brought it to her by the late post of a rainy afternoon. When she recognized the handwriting she flushed with annoyance, feeling that Gino's eyes were upon her ; but putting the letter on a table she continued their conversation where it had been interrupted, measuring tea into the teapot while she talked. Gino made no comment, but she knew that he was watching her, and for this reason the color stayed in her cheeks, rather deepening than otherwise because of her irritation at its presence.

When the tea was ready she called to her aunt, who was writing in the next room, and the moment Mrs. Garrison sat down she saw the envelope.

"You have a letter from Jack !"

"Yes," answered Anne, and she could have cried with annoyance. "Is your tea too strong, Aunt Margaret?" she asked as carelessly as she could ; and then prepared Gino's, remarking with a smile that she could not make it too strong for him, and

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that when they were married she should reform him on this point at least.

The little pleasantry was obviously an effort, and Gino received it in silence. Turning to Mrs. Garrison, he asked her what news there was from her husband, and discussed his plans and adventures with her till she left the room for an appointment with a friend who lived in the apartment above.

There followed a slight pause while Gino looked at the letter.

"I was not aware," he said finally, "that Doctor — er — what is his name?"

"Swift."

"Ah! I was not aware that this Doctor Swift corresponded with you!"

Anne was displeased by the slight accent of contempt with which he used the prefix indicating Jack's profession.

"I received a letter from him after announcing my engagement to you. There has been no other until to-day," she said.

"And what," asked Gino, "is the reason for the one of to-day?"

"Not having opened it, I cannot tell," she answered. "Gino, you are not going to be unreasonable again, are you?" There was both exasperation and weariness in her voice.

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The mysterious sources of our moods were at work within Anne that day, impelling her toward impatience and easy resentment.

"Anne," said Gino quietly, "it does not please me that you receive letters from other men."

She laughed slightly, and bent forward to put out the light under the tea-urn.

"Dear Gino," she said, "I have no wish to receive them. What shall we do about it?"

"I cannot," he continued, still quietly, "permit you to receive them. You do not understand these questions."

"I do not understand or like the word 'permit,'" she answered; and then repenting of her impatience she added: "You know, Gino, that what you wish is my happiness to do. But a wish is not a command."

"Ah!" His monosyllable was long drawn and slightly sarcastic. "Am I to understand that in America women no longer obey commands?"

"They cannot," said Anne gravely.

"Is it permitted to ask why?"

"Because we might be asked to do something that was wrong."

"Ah!" breathed Gino again in the same tone. "But you," he added, "are marrying an Italian."

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"One whom I love enough to be glad to obey," she answered, putting out her hand to him.

"When it is right?" he asked.

"When it is right."

Gino bent his eyes upon the carpet and appeared to be pondering her statement. Suddenly he glanced at the letter.

"We will return to conversation about this letter," he said, indicating the offending envelope with his hand.

"Certainly. What shall we say about it?" she asked quietly; but then cried out with some sharpness, "Gino! Do you not see that you exasperate me with this childish suspicion?"

A slight lifting of the eyebrows was his only reply.

"What do you intend to do with the letter?"

"What I usually do with letters. Will you please ring for Dioniseo to take away the tea?"

"No. I do not choose to be interrupted just yet."

Anne leaned back and toyed with her ring.

"With regard to the letter, I shall follow my usual course," she said lightly. "First, I shall read it, and then show it to you — unless there is something in it of Jack's private affairs."

"So you have affairs with him which I do not share."

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There was a hint of growing violence in his voice, and at the sound of it Anne's perversity vanished. She dropped her hands and turned a beseeching face toward him.

"Gino," she cried, "please — please — do not be unreasonable. I feel as if I could not bear it to-day."

"Your ideas of unreason are puzzling," he said; "as is your ignorance of etiquette. You think it is nothing that while engaged to me you receive other men and sit with them alone, or receive letters from them which I may not see."

His eyes had the alien and hostile look she had learned to dread, and this afternoon she felt helpless before it, helpless for anything save to answer anger with anger. Gino continued to speak: —

"I have understood the freedom you have allowed yourself with me as some men would not have understood it," he said; "but with this American doctor —"

"Stop!" cried Anne. "You are saying what I cannot forgive. I am sorry that in my relationship with you I have so strained your understanding, but I will relieve it for the future. Until we are married we will walk or sit no more alone together"; and rising she pressed the electric button. "I am ringing for Dioniseo to help you with

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your coat," she continued breathlessly. "Unfortunately my aunt is out, and we cannot be properly chaperoned."

She flung herself into a chair and covered her face with her hands, while Gino walked to and fro rather heavily, with a bent head. It was the first time he had seen Anne lose control of herself, and seeing her unreason his manhood came to the rescue of them both.

Dioniseo appeared in a moment and Anne removed her hands from her face.

"I rang for you to assist Signor Curatulo," she said. "He is going."

But Gino raised his head. "I do not go yet," he said to the servant. "I have changed my mind. Later, Dioniseo, we will ring again." Then he came over to Anne's chair and stood behind it, bending over her. "You are saying things you do not mean," he told her, not unkindly.

"I know. I know." The girl suddenly began to sob. "I am ashamed, for we acted and spoke like children. Oh, Gino, do not let us be angry with each other when we love so well. You are the man, you are the stronger — help me not to be angry. Anger is a terrible thing. It makes us strike at those we love — it makes us speak words that we may never be able to forget. I did not mean what

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I said, and I know that you did not, because I know that you love and honor me more than any other woman in the world or you would not ask me to be your wife. But Gino — you must try to trust me — indeed, indeed you must. No, — you cannot kiss me yet. Look into my eyes — you know that I love you, you know that you have the power to make life a glorious or a dreadful thing for me. And yet you can be jealous — you can suspect me! Ah! my dear, my dear! try to trust me, try to believe what in your heart you know — that I am all yours, and that in all the world no other man exists for me but you. Try — Gino! Yes, you may kiss me now! But try to trust me as well as love me, or some dreadful thing will happen to our love.”

Holding her in his arms Gino quieted her, though confessing that his fear of losing her drove him beyond his own control, and that the sadness and uncertainty of life was such that at all moments a man might well fear that the thing which made it worth living might be taken from him. And so Anne was comforted, but the crux of the matter — the poisonous thing — still lay between them in the shape of Jack’s letter, and seeing Gino look at it, she put it into his hand.

“Take it,” she said, “and burn it. Burn it here

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and now before me, so that you may see how little it is to me."

Gino took the letter from her slowly, and slowly walked to the fireplace, but there he paused.

"Burn it, Gino," said Anne.

"Would it not be better that we read it together?" And she knew that with the warmth of her lips still upon his, he was distrusting her again.

There was a silence in the room, and then Anne sighed. He turned at the sound, for through the silence the sigh had seemed strangely long, and as though caused by a bitter weariness of spirit. He looked at her lying back in her chair, pale after her emotion, and he met her smile. It was not a smile of youth, it was not a happy smile, or one that he understood. He met her eyes: did they entreat? or warn? An echo of the sigh was in his ears.

"Burn the letter," she said again; and Gino bent over the flame, but drew back suddenly.

"No!" he cried, and struck the envelope violently with the back of his hand. "No, there is something in it which you are afraid to have me see!" He flung it on the table and thrust his hands in his pockets, abandoning himself to the tide of his passion.

Anne looked up at him, motionless in her chair.

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“What you have just said to me is so incredible that I have no words with which to answer you,” she said slowly.

“If you will not read it with me, give it to me to read for myself.”

“No,” she said, “I cannot do that.”

“You refuse! Take care!”

Anne paused as though to choose her words carefully.

“There are intimate and peculiar circumstances concerning Jack’s family,” she said. “I cannot allow any one to see that letter until I know that it contains no mention of them.”

“What are all these excuses to me?” he cried. “You have received a letter from a man which you will not allow me to see, and which I will see. Do you understand? Or do you think me the kind of fool to endure such treatment?”

“Gino! Think what you say! Think what you mean! The letter is not mine to give. It cannot be until I know what is in it.” She stretched out her hands beseechingly. “Gino, do not ask for the letter.”

“I must see it—”

“Do not say the words—”

“Enough of this, Anne. I shall take the letter. When I have done it we shall have peace, and you

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will understand what a man's rights are over the woman he is to marry."

She looked at him a moment with eyes wide and amazed, and then cried out suddenly as though some spring of endurance had been broken within her : —

"You shall not have it. Thank God, I do not love you well enough for that!" and with a swift movement she took the letter and thrust it into the bosom of her dress.

"Do you know what this means?" cried Gino, furious, and amazed also.

"I know what it had better mean, for neither life nor love are worth having at the price of so violent a mistrust and unreason."

She fell upon her knees by her chair and broke into wild weeping, and for a moment Gino stood over her, beside himself with rage and pain.

"Then this is good-by," he said; and waited by her bowed and shaking form, hoping that she would answer him with sudden yielding.

But she did not yield, and the sound of her weeping was his only answer.

CHAPTER XXI

BY THE FOUNTAIN OF MOSES

ANNE never knew how she finally induced herself to read Jack's letter, which had been the innocent cause of such anguish to her.

DEAR ANNE [it ran], I am giving a friend, an especially struggling young artist, a letter to your aunt. Do induce her to be a little kind to him (I know you are otherwise occupied), because he is a sort of lost mother's darling who believes that "Art" with a big A has called him. I don't, but that's another matter, and being a bad artist does not prevent one from being a homesick boy.

That you are still happy will be always the hope of
Yours sincerely,

JACK SWIFT.

In a postscript he made a short but definite allusion to that family circumstance which Anne could not honorably speak of to Gino, so she was debarred from sending him the letter.

The girl made no attempt to hide her misery,

BY THE FOUNTAIN OF MOSES

knowing well that such attempt would be useless. She told her aunt that she and Gino had quarreled and that their engagement was broken, and finally she told the cause of the quarrel. Mrs. Garrison gave her somewhat ruthless comfort.

“You are well rid of him, my child,” she said. “He has what to well-ordered persons like ourselves is an incredible temperament, and with all his good qualities he has faults which you would have found it hard to forgive. You would have said some day, ‘Why do I love this man?’ and that would have been the beginning of your not loving him. Already I have wondered that you could care for him as you did — a man who not only is incapable of trust, but who will lie to you, as he has done on one or two occasions of which you know —”

But Margaret got no further, for Anne rose. “Aunt Margaret,” she said, “you must never say a word against him to me again, for I cannot bear it even if I would.”

But Mrs. Garrison, in spite of the inevitable frankness of her speech, was troubled by the intensity of Anne’s suffering. She doubted her own capacity for suffering to any such degree even if harm came to her husband, and she found it dreadful to sit at meals opposite her niece’s pale face that seemed to become hourly thinner and more

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frail, while the violet shadows grew under her eyes. The girl tried to be brave and to face pain as many millions had faced it before her; but misery seemed upon her like some fatal sickness, and though she turned from one thing to another seeking escape, her efforts were as barren in relief as the tossings of one in fever. In the mere fact of consciousness there was pain. If the sun shone it was a mocking and dreadful thing; if it rained, that also was dreadful: the desolate and inconceivable millions of falling drops shut her in relentlessly with misery. How was life to be endured on these terms?

When she had endured it for three days she went alone to the Pincian Hill at the hour of noon, not admitting to herself any hope of seeing Gino, but seeking instinctively the place where she had known some of her greatest happiness. It seemed as though some friendliness must lurk for her there among the familiar and beloved trees and marbles.

At the entrance a victoria drew up beside her and she was called by the deep voice of Lady Fitz-Smith.

"What is all this nonsense between you and Curatulo?" asked the Englishwoman abruptly, as Anne stood beside the carriage.

"Our engagement is broken," said the girl.



WHAT IS ALL THIS NONSENSE BETWEEN YOU AND
CURATULO?

BY THE FOUNTAIN OF MOSES

Lady Fitz-Smith looked at her in silence.

“Put up your veil, my dear,” she said; “I never can endure those spotted things over the faces of people I am fond of.”

Anne obeyed, and then Lady Fitz-Smith looked more closely at the wan young face, nodding her head the while.

“It is just as I supposed, only worse,” she remarked. “What a fuss young people make about love! It seems to hurt in a most unreasonable way considering how sure one is to get over it. I know what it is. You feel as if the sun could never shine for you again, happiness is a word, laughter without mirth, the very cosmic forces out of gear, and it would be useless to tell you what is true, — that in a few years you will have forgotten each other. What is this quarrel all about?”

“Gino cannot trust me,” said Anne.

“What is that? Say it louder, — the coachman can’t understand a word of English. Gino can’t trust you? Pish! Of course he can’t. Why should he, knowing the world as well as he does? Italians are even less trustworthy than we are in these matters; but they are dears just the same. Why insist upon impossible abstract moral qualities? It may please you to know that Gino is quite wild with anger and grief. He came to me at once and told

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me about it, and I gave him what he deserved. The next evening he came again, and sat on the sofa for half an hour with his head in his hands, without saying a word, and then went away. What manners! I told him so, and that he must not come back until he could be more amusing. The next night he came again at just the same time and did just the same thing! Now, my dear, this must stop for my sake if for no other. Think over what I say. Make it up, or you will be ill, and he will be mad, and Heaven knows what might not happen to me at my age. — *Andate, Francesco,*” she said to the coachman; and to Anne she called as the horses started: “Don’t neglect the advice of an old, and more than usually wise, woman.”

The girl walked languidly and weakly through the brilliant sunshine; and driving in the opposite direction the Dowager communed half aloud with herself.

“They may be wretched if they marry,” she murmured, “they will certainly be so if they don’t, and they seem extraordinarily unhappy. It may be fate that sent him out of the Pincio by one gate just as she came into it by another. It may equally be fate that sent me here in time to bring him back again. *Chi lo sa!* But I may as well help.”

And so thinking, she prodded her coachman in

BY THE FOUNTAIN OF MOSES

the back with her parasol, ordering him to return and drive toward the Borghese Gardens, overtaking if possible the gentleman who had been speaking with her a while ago. They came upon Gino just at the end of the new road which leads from the Pincian Hill to the Gardens, and here Lady Fitz-Smith stopped her carriage again and told Gino to return at once whence he had come, and to walk about among the trees and statues until he found Anne, and then to behave as much like a reasonable being as it was possible for him to do.

So it happened that to Anne, standing desolately by a large fountain where the Pharaoh's daughter kneels by the infant Moses, there came Gino, who stood on the other side of the basin and looked at her across the water. For a moment they gazed at each other in silence, each seeing that the other was wasted as though by illness.

"Speak to me," said Gino. "I have suffered more than I can bear. Tell me what you will — and I will believe. You cannot be more eager to deceive me than I am to be comforted. Speak to me."

But Anne did not speak. Under his words she seemed to have received a deeper wound than any he had given her, and before the wonder and reproach of her eyes he was ashamed.

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“I did not mean it,” he said. “When I see you, I know that you love me. I know that you would not deceive, Anne — speak to me!”

“I have said that you would break my heart,” she answered slowly and heavily, “and some day what I have said will come true. But it is too late for me to save myself. Without you it seems that I cannot live.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE OTHER SIDE

IT was May before Anne sailed for America, and her last weeks with Gino remained everlastingly in the memory of both as a time of entire happiness and peace. The element of uncertainty and peril that had seemed at times to walk hand in hand with her love retreated to distant regions of her consciousness, and now every day bound her closer to the man who was to be her husband. It was not so much the flood-tides of rapturous feeling that gave her this sense of security, as the dear and daily communion of domestic details. Together they examined and put in order all personal effects of Gino's mother, and his loyalty to her memory, the now quiet though vivid evidences of his grief for her loss, made the girl love him more, if that were possible, than she had done before.

During the summer months of separation there seemed to be no danger of Gino's fulfilling the prophecy of Lady Fitz-Smith and finding another woman charming. He wrote from Rome, where he lingered through a part of the hot lonely summer,

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occupied only with a leisurely and final putting in order of his mother's effects, and preparation of the apartment he and Anne were to occupy after their marriage. In August he went to the Alban Hills, and wrote of his loneliness amidst the beauty and romance about him.

"I do not wish my beloved to suffer as I suffer," he told her, "and yet, such is the inconsistency of man, I would not have her suffer less!"

It was certain that Anne did not suffer "less." She was sad to leave the land and friends that had made her life up to the moment of her meeting Gino Curatulo, but loyalty to her past existence could not do away with something that at moments became almost a wildness of unrest to return to the man she loved. The gravity of her decision to marry into an unknown world and race, the serious and controlled thought she summoned to aid her in planning for the unknown future, made her feel older, and as her girl's nature developed into the depth and power of a woman's, so her love grew in depth and power also; for there was not any part of her, nor mind, nor sense, nor spirit, which could move independently of love.

Several times during the summer she saw Jack.

"Don't be surprised," he said, "if I am in Rome at the time when you expect to be married."

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"But why do you say 'expect'?"

"Because there is a mutability in human affairs, and no one can do anything but 'expect' anything until it actually happens. Shall I be asked to the ceremony?"

"I do not know," answered Anne frankly.
"Gino is very jealous of you."

"Of me?"

"Yes. He imagines all kinds of things —"
Anne paused.

"Ah," said Jack. His blue eyes held hers firmly.
"Why, may I ask, does he imagine — things?"

"Because he is a Latin."

"Perhaps it would be more exact to say he suspects things."

"If you insist upon being exact, it would."

"The Latins suspect more easily than ourselves because they deceive more easily. Under those circumstances they are sensible to be suspicious. We think a Latin a knave or a fool if he suspects that his wife is being made love to because another man sits by her twice during an evening; but as a matter of fact he is neither knave nor fool, but a wise person, for the probability is, if they are in a Latin or cosmopolitan society, that the other man is trying to make love to her. Am I right?"

"Yes," admitted Anne, adding shrewdly: "You

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cold-blooded northern men and women are not interested in each other as they are in warmer countries. If you were, you would probably do as they do, and the man who talked often with your wife would be likely to love her."

"Now," said Jack, "I must admit that you are right. It is all geographical."

Her friend's scientific attitude displeased Anne, and she changed the subject.

"How can you possibly return to Italy for another year?" she asked.

"The Wilkinsons have asked me to take their son over again."

"But, Jack, isn't it a mistake to put off beginning your practice for another winter?"

"Possibly," said Jack. "But other things might be more of a mistake."

Pausing, he looked at her with a certain intentness, but did not offer to explain his words; nor did she inquire their meaning, though an unadmitted suspicion of it flashed into her consciousness.

"So far as getting ahead in a professional way is concerned, I now feel confident I can do that, and make what money I need any time I need it," he continued.

His words were assured and purposeful, and still curiously deliberate, as was the look with which

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his eyes held hers. When he had gone she put both hands to her flushed face and told herself she was learning suspicion from Gino; for it had come to her suddenly that Jack loved her, that he was going back to Rome in order to take her away from Gino if he could possibly do so, and that what he had said of his success in the profession he had chosen was to show her his circumstances had changed sufficiently to make it possible for him to marry.

Argue with herself as she would, she could not argue the idea entirely away, nor yet the sense of dread with which she thought of his presence in Rome during the first months of her return to Gino.

She did not voluntarily see him again that summer, but when obliged to do so it seemed to her that he sought to quiet any discomfort she might feel regarding him, by the easy, informal, and almost careless friendliness of his manner towards her, a manner usual among American men and girls, and possible only in a society like theirs, where free and constant association in work and play creates a familiarity which goes far toward destroying the mystery and charm of one for the other.

From time to time Anne heard that he was doing brilliant work at the State Hospital, but of this he said nothing.

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It was inevitable that she should recompare the ideals of the world she was leaving with those of the one she was entering, and in the clarity and wholesomeness of her own social life, which was very gay, and a little crude, a little bare, lacking the emotional interest given to European society by its prevailing motive, — the eternal interest of man and woman in one another, — she was aware that such men as she had met among the Latins, men who maintained that love of woman was the dominating interest of their life, would appear an abortion. No such man could work. The New England man's obligation to work, to make an effort of some kind, seemed to the girl almost overpowering even after her brief migration into a land of other ideals.

She could imagine Gino by her side watching what to him would be an amazing spectacle ; noting the multitude of toilers whom early trains carried daily into the steaming city and returned in the afternoon weary and devitalized. He would see hundreds of men who did not have to work to live, and who yet never had more than two weeks' freedom during the year. He would hear wives of rich men complain that during a marriage of thirty years their husbands had never found time for a holiday in Europe ; and she could hear the Italian

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ask: "Why do they do it — those who do not have to?" and she would reply that many of them worked in order that they might live better. The American people were ambitious; their wives were not content to remain in an inferior social position as were the women of other countries, and money alone could lift them; so the husbands must work.

"Bad wives! bad wives!" she could hear Gino murmur; "and foolish husbands."

"Work is good. Work is purifying," she told him in these imaginary arguments. "Your own nobility would not be so vicious if it were not so idle. Effort is good for the mind and character as exercise is good for the body. The man who has achieved something has justified his existence among men." But again she knew that Gino would waive her argument aside. "What matters it that a man justifies his existence to men? If he is happy, he has justified his existence to himself. And if we must be ethical, is there anything more noble in work on the stock exchange than in leisure? Is there not much truth in those who say that the industrial, the competitive system works through corruption and cruelty? Do you mean to tell me that your business men work collectively for an unselfish purpose? Rather do they seem to me more slaves than workers — slaves brought up in a monstrous machine.

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No man in the world (who is not a slave), not even the English who are your nearest relatives, work as you do. And what is the result? Can you show a civilization superior to any other?"

Then Anne knew that she would point out to him the far-reaching system of charities, work for which the most worldly women were planning during the brief summer-time; and here she felt that Gino would not withhold his admiration, though on close inspection he would protest against carrying even this work to the point of hurry and fatigue, and suggest that as much of charitable work was restlessness, or desire for prominence, as unselfishness, and that in any case it was doubtful how much good charities accomplished.

It was natural that Anne should strive to give every emphasis to his point of view, for she knew that, weighed in the standards of her own people, he did not give full measure, and this was her secret unhappiness; but in the very moments of facing it she was almost wild with misery to return to him. Her presence by his side would be the outward and visible sign of her faith in him, and she longed to be again surrounded by the charm of his warmth and manhood, and those human qualities which had won her where sterner and more definitely moral natures had failed.

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It had been terrible to her that certain standards of virtue that hung like immutable stars on her horizon should be disregarded by him, and yet they were disregarded, and with such hardihood, such merriment, even, that she experienced a shock of bewilderment.

Her Aunt Margaret had never been bewildered, for her understanding, somewhat rigid and limited, enabled her to see clearly and definitely, as do those who cannot see very far. It is easy to choose an ideal when you recognize but one. But Mrs. Garrison stood by her niece loyally, and said many things in praise of Gino, though Anne knew that her disapproval of the marriage remained deep and unaltered.

Before the summer was over she became conscious that Jack Swift also stood by her side in her championship of another race.

"It's colossal idiocy for us to sit over here and think there's no good in any foreigner, which is what most of us do think," she heard of him saying; and once, in her presence, when a friend with whom she was watching the apparent perils of a polo game told her that she would miss these manly pastimes in her adopted country, and hoped she would bring up her children in the manly American way, Jack's reply was vigorous: "The Italians are the

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best fencers, the most daring riders, and some of the best swimmers in the world," he said.

And again, when she was subject to a semi-humorous attack upon her engagement, Jack, outwardly careless and smiling, said : " I lived with an Italian family for two months last winter, and they could have given many of our American husbands and children lessons in domesticity."

So Anne was made to feel that Jack was her one defender among all the many friends whose disapproval and foreboding were only slightly veiled.

This was generous of Jack if the thing he had seemed to reveal in that one unwillingly remembered look of his were true. Would Gino be capable of such generosity if he had been so wounded? Anne had scarcely put herself the question before she answered it, and the answer bruised her. But was Jack wounded? In the careless ease of his friendliness there was no hint of pain, and on the wharf at the moment of her sailing for Italy he was the most self-possessed and helpful of all those who came with flowers and candy to wish her good fortune. It was Jack who rescued her state-room trunk from the hold into which it was plunged by mistake, and Jack who advised her as to the best place on the deck for her steamer-chair ; but not even a note from him was found among the many

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letters and gifts which were put into her state-room, nor did she see him among the group of friends who stood on the pier to watch the great "Liner" so long as she was in view.

Was he absent because he could not bear to see her sail away? The question, in the face of his cheerful good-by as he leaped from the gang-plank just before it was drawn up, seemed a fatuous one.

She was annoyed with the persistence of a conviction that Jack loved her, a conviction which haunted her as though automatically, in spite of the admirable reasons with which she assailed it. He had never returned to the subject of his winter in Rome, and she hoped that the chance of his being there had not materialized; for how could the same city hold Jack, Curatulo, and her happiness?

CHAPTER XXIII

MANY WATERS

MR. WARREN sailed for Italy with his daughter. He was a tall and distinguished gentleman whose appearance seemed to place him a little backward, in that social period before the word "gentleman" had become misused. Amiable and restless eyes looked futilely from his slightly emaciated face, and it could be surmised that the heavy military mustache hid a mouth that was amiable and futile also.

He was delighted by the prospect of a change in his existence, and giving full rein to his talent for agreeable chatter and comment, was soon on friendly terms with a large part of the ship's company. When not talking, he read persistently from Pepys's Diary, thus testifying to himself his final emancipation from what he characterized as "the thin-blooded" traditions of his own land. He was looking forward to years of leisure which he could enjoy without disgrace, and to possible adventures into sentiment which would no longer be unbecoming to a man of his years.

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While Mr. Warren reflected so pleasantly upon the future, a rapturous excitement was growing upon his daughter. Miles were streaming under her by thousands, and every hour brought her nearer to Italy. Joy grew upon her, it called in the great winds and seemed a part of cosmic things. He was waiting for her: in four days—in three—in two, she would be in his arms. What was life that it should hold such happiness? To a nature over-sensitive and not estranged from melancholy the happiness was bewildering. What had she done, she, Anne Warren, to deserve such immensity of joy?

At the gates of Gibraltar she seemed already with him, and gloried to feel herself in the world's market-place where the nations jostle one another as ships from all parts of the earth come and go. She was in his world—the rich and multicolored European world—for life. He had described the scene as she saw it now,—the arid, savage, and splendid mountains of Spain on her left, a low lying hint and a dream of Africa on her right, and between them the looming, shadowy Rock, with the peoples of many races playing about its feet, and the secrets of death in its heart. He had not told her that the color on the water was so beautiful that it hurt.

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At Naples Gino was to meet her and sail with them to Genoa, from which place Mr. Warren wished to visit Florence; but she found a telegram from him instead. He had not been prepared for her taking so early a steamer. He had gone to the Dolomites with a friend, and was detained by a touch of fever, nothing serious, and a letter would meet the steamer at Genoa.

Anne handed the telegram to her father without a word, and he read it with the casual expression, "Too bad! too bad! I am disappointed." Then, seeing the pallor of his daughter's face, he added with the graceful kindness that often exists in a fundamentally selfish nature, "My little girl must not worry: there never was an Italian not subject to fever," and putting his arm about her he kissed her forehead.

Anne received the caress with her outward person only; within she felt herself suddenly frozen. The long intolerable day passed slowly, a day when the passengers sought escape from the discomfort of the ship's "coaling up," and scattered upon various expeditions of sight-seeing in the city, while the girl's misery grew to heat and passion within her. That she recognized it to be misery out of proportion to the event did not give her ease. With her father and a select number of friends

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made during the voyage she visited museums and shops, and ate a luncheon composed of Italian *polenta* and *frittura mista*, a repast which delighted her father, and caused him to rejoice openly that he had escaped into a finer air from the tyranny of meat three times a day.

It seemed to the girl grotesque that people should enjoy a *frittura* or a museum, or a Neapolitan street. What were these things? What was life, indeed, that one should suffer so much for what her reason told her was so slight a cause? If she could be so unhappy because she could not see Gino and because he had a touch of fever, what would it be to lose him? Her own capacity for unhappiness frightened her. It was a thing she had not realized when she faced life and welcomed its possibilities.

That night she did not sleep, and the next morning she stood wearily by her father's side among the passengers who gathered to watch the activity and fun in many small boats that clustered under the steel bulwark of the ocean "Liner." Gayly dressed girls sang shrilly, catching rewarding *soldi* in their inverted parasols, boys dove with incredible skill after small coins, and the travelers who were to pass through the scene so quickly saw its picturesqueness, and the beauty and charm of

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the city spread over the foot hills of a smoking mountain. But Anne saw only the squalor and cruelty of the Neapolitan population, the coarseness in the faces of gayly singing girls, the blind man who stood in a rocking boat pointing to his empty eye-sockets as he called hoarsely for money. The world was full of pain and ignominy, and the smoking mountain above it all seemed belching forth fumes of a relentless and unaccountable force : the force that controlled her destiny. She was conscious of a dread that in one way or another the destiny intended that she should lose the man she loved.

The steamer sailed that morning, and passing along the coast of Ischia her mood softened, for the loveliness soothed her, and she felt able to write Gino.

“Missing you has been so dreadful that I dare not tell you of it, lest you learn how greatly I need you. That you should be ill and I unable to go to you — Ah, Gino ! life must give us great rewards to make up for this. I am trying not to be anxious, for I know that you have had attacks of fever before, and there is no danger in them ; but, indeed, I am almost ill with anxiety. Do reason and philosophy ever work, I wonder, except when we do not need either ?

“There is no address in your telegram, and you

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seem lost. I do not tell you how I have thought of you, what the passing hours of this voyage have meant to me because of you, because you know how well — how helplessly well I love you.

“We have just passed through what must be the loveliest waters in the world. And we were to have sailed them together, Gino! We were to have seen together the small and magical islands all about, — the tower where Vittoria Colonna died, a little city, white, and old — old — old, curving about the shores of a little bay; a silken sea, opal-colored, that scarcely breaks under our bows.

“The fear that you may be very ill strangles me. If you had not been, would you not have sent me a line with your own hand instead of a telegram?

“To-morrow we arrive at Genoa, and though it seems as if I could scarcely breathe till then, the fear that once there nothing will be heard from you turns me actually sick and faint.”

At Genoa there was a short note from Gino written in pencil. He had been ill, he told her, but was better now and in a few days hoped to join her at Florence. He wished to go to her at once, for he felt that seeing her would make him well; but the doctor and a friend who was with him threatened to tie him in bed at his first attempt to rise from it.

From Florence Anne wished to go to him, and

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but for the pressure of Gino himself, who felt that the roughness of his surroundings would be more than she could face, and a private letter from the friend who was with him begging her not to do what must cause Gino even more distress than he suffered from his eagerness to join her, she would have left her father and, taking a maid, have braved the danger of travel through the rarely traveled region that must be passed before she could reach him.

Days began to pass without immediate hope of his coming to her, and Mr. Warren voiced a suspicion. "I hope he isn't playing you any trick, my dear. You can never tell about these foreign fellows."

There was a drop of especially virulent poison in Anne's cup of misery, and on a certain sleepless night she wrote a letter in which she confessed it.

"Gino — why couldn't you have waited? Why couldn't you have waited a few weeks longer for me in Rome? You must have known I might come on an earlier steamer. I wrote you while on the way to Genoa that I was wild with anxiety about your illness, and this was true; but during the hours when I sat and looked at that dreadful naked sea this was the question that I asked myself, 'Why did he not wait? If he loved me as I loved him he

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would have waited.' And though I did not admit the thing to myself or to you, I know now that it was with me, and that I asked myself there as I do now in this dreadful dawn — was it a woman that took you? — Ah, the written words shame me! The blinding, terrible words —!

“It is you who have taught me to doubt. You doubted me. During many of the weeks that should have been the happiest of our lives you often left me wounded by you — by your very love of me, as nothing in my life that is past, as I pray God nothing in my life to come, may wound me again.

“I did not think love could be like this — so full of cruelty, suspicion, and danger. And if love can fail so — —! I ask myself if love is worth having at such a price —!

“Yesterday I went into a church and stood beside a death-tablet. The figure lay on the ground with folded hands, and the passing of many feet had worn him almost away. How quiet he was! I felt the time pass and pass as the many feet have passed over him while he slept; and it made me love death. Would it not be better to lie so than to suffer as we suffer?

“Perhaps I shall not send this letter. It is unjust and cruel and you are ill. Oh, my dearest, come to me soon or let me go to you, for indeed I

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am suffering more than it is good for any one to suffer ! What will life ever give us to make up for these hours ! ”

A few hours later Anne wrote him again : —

“ I am ashamed and afraid of what I have written you ! Do not think of the letter again. Do not come to me one day or one hour earlier than is safe for you. I feel self-abased, unworthy for you to come to at all, because I had it in me to suspect you so, to send you such words when you were ill, and suffering. Forgive me for them if you can, and know they were written because at times I feel quite irrational from the misery of missing you.

“ We leave Florence in a few days and go straight to Rome, where we shall wait for you. I believe Florence is more compact with loveliness than any city in the world ; there are even moments when I think it is too perfect, too decoratively picturesque, too conscious of what charming picture post-cards it would make from almost any point of view. I prefer the gravity and breadth of Rome in spite of its unevenness, its spaces of gauntness and squalor.

“ Papa has enjoyed the palaces and pictures very much, though I think he has enjoyed realizing his appreciation of them even more ! Papa, you must know, is a little vain — like the rest of us. Unfor-

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tunately it has now begun to rain here, and they say when it once begins no one dares say when it will stop. Also it is cold, and the river is rising, with quite an unwholesome breath, and the noise under our windows on the cobblestones of the Lung' Arno is terrific, and there is really no good hotel or food in Florence, and Papa has a sore throat and is quite irritated, so we go to Rome to-morrow to wait for you there, and as there is no part of Rome which does not mean you, so I feel that when I reach it I shall be actually nearer to you.

“You see from these words that I am entirely rational again. Remember that I am perfectly well and can wait for you as long as need be ; and remember, though I may write you half-crazed letters during the hours of mysterious weakness which come just before the dawn, that I *know* there is no thought of another woman between you and me, and that I am glad the doctor threatens to tie you in bed, and hope he will actually do so if you try to get up out of it an hour too soon.”

CHAPTER XXIV

FALLING LEAVES

IT was early November when Mr. Warren and his daughter arrived in Rome. They took rooms in one of the modern and distinctly Americanized establishments on the Via Veneto, from the windows of which they could look into the Queen Mother's garden, as well as the small area of terrace and roof-gardens where the Capuchin monks walk in their recreation time. Mr. Warren found Roman hotels really good, and he had the further satisfaction of becoming a member of the golf club almost immediately.

It was bewildering for Anne to find herself anywhere but in the stately old rooms down in the lower city ; and almost did it seem as though she were not in Rome, the things that made her life there were so different from what had made it the winter before. How different the noisy hotel bell-boys and porters from the silent-footed and radiantly sympathetic Dioniseo ! How different the dreary publicity of overheated halls and reading-rooms from the cool and sequestered beauty of her aunt's apartment in the ancient palace !

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And the social world of Rome was empty. Neither tourist nor resident comes to the city in November, and Anne found herself friendless in the place where her days had been filled with friends.

A letter from Lady Fitz-Smith was the first thing that brought her comfort. The Dowager wrote from England that she hoped to be in Rome again soon enough for the wedding, and that she had learned of Gino's illness from a friend who had just returned from the Dolomites where he had seen him. But she urged Anne not to be anxious, because he was not going to die, and at least she could be sure he was not flirting with any one, a suspicion that might reasonably have been aroused by his continued absence.

On reading this Anne felt her face burn with shame. A letter from Gino written in pencil, and evidently with difficulty, answered the bitter one she had written him from Florence. He passed her suspicions over lightly as though they were of little importance, but told her his reason for leaving Rome before her arrival, which was a continuation of the slight fever he had suffered from all summer, but had not spoken of, as it had not seemed important enough, and he did not want to worry her. It was nothing but what he had been subject to at increasingly rare intervals ever since his African

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trip; but when September came his doctor had insisted upon his breaking it up by a trip to the mountains, and as it seemed really important to do so and there was no apparent prospect of her near arrival, he had gone, only to be taken really ill there.

And now Anne was plunged into an abyss of self-reproach and an exaggerated sense of ignominy that she should have so unjustly suspected him. To her candid and honest nature suspicion was intolerable, but she was able to recognize Gino's responsibility for its presence within her. So conscious himself of the hazard of love, of the possibilities of treason and change that beset it, he had given her his knowledge.

Days went by, and the rain continued, though it lacked the torrential quality it had assumed in Florence. Anne set herself to await Gino with what patience she could contrive, but she found patience to be at best a dreary thing. Walking the familiar streets alone, and seeing them from under the dripping edge of her umbrella, she felt Rome to be like a friend with changed and averted face. Yet she walked almost daily among the scenes where she had walked with Gino, finding there some kindliness, though the light was so different from that of spring!

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The Borghese Gardens were full of falling leaves — withered leaves, yellow and brown, — which drifted shivering and chattering over the slopes and valleys, fluttered through the dull green of the ilex trees, and lay in the fountains, which stood like forgotten things in the silent avenues, their stone basins cold and gray, their waters falling sadly.

One day she took a *carozza* and drove to the entrance of the palace where she had lived. Ordering the man to wait for her outside, she walked up the dear familiar driveway under trees whose leaves also were falling, and paused by the dim old statue, and paused again by the fountain that stood just in front of the *portone* through which she had passed so often and so happily. Who would live in the beautiful rooms this year? At present they seemed to be unoccupied, for the great line of windows were empty of hangings and seemed to stare down upon her coldly, without recognition or friendliness. It was chilly and melancholy under the iron gray walls that inclosed the terraced driveway, and the quiet spot which last year had seemed friendly to her young romance gave her now an odd sense of having withdrawn itself to the contemplation of its own memories, its ancient and guarded secrets.

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Would Gino never come back to bring joy and warmth? Staring with desolate eyes through the branches upon which hung a ragged garment of yellow leaves withering in the November mist, Anne felt as though lost in a world of sadness and decay. The stone parapet upon which she rested her hand was cold, and bitter to the touch.

Returning to the hotel, and while waiting drearily for the "lift," Jack Swift walked out to her from the reading-room. For a moment she stared at him almost unrecognizing, so much an alien was he to her thought — so far away was he from the sad and feverish world of her present consciousness. But the next minute she stretched out both hands to him, and tears came to her eyes.

"Oh, Jack!" she said, "I have been so lonely!"

"I should say so," he exclaimed. "Why, Anne, you look ill and hardly pretty at all!"

She smiled tremulously.

"I think I am going to cry," she said.

"Do," urged Jack cordially; "only come into the reading-room first, where the hall porter cannot see you. No, there is an old gentleman there reading the Paris 'Herald' through two pairs of spectacles. Let us try the smoking-room. Ladies are allowed there I know, because one just came

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out. It appears to be empty of all things save leather seats and a smell of last night's tobacco. Shall we sit here? Now, tell me all about it."

They sat in a corner behind a palm tree which gave them a semblance of privacy, and Anne, having now lost the desire to cry, looked at her friend with unmistakable gratitude.

"You seem so real, Jack," she said.

"Don't other people seem real?"

"There aren't other people," she answered. "Gino is ill with fever in the Dolomites."

"Ah!"

"And I have been waiting — and waiting. Oh, it is so terrible to wait! Coming back to Rome has been like coming back to a tomb. Everything is dead that lived here when I saw it last. All the friends are gone, and the sunlight, — the wonderful clear sunlight, and the magical clear skies, — and so it seems as if — as if —"

She paused and turned her eyes to the window, against which the rain had begun to fall.

"As if what?" he asked gently, though he bent forward and looked at her with a steady and penetrating glance which was not, in that moment, gentle at all.

"It seems as if — love might be lost, too," she answered.

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Jack did not reply nor change his attitude, but waited, wisely inviting her further speech by his determined silence.

"Love is not what I thought," said Anne, turning her eyes and her wan thin face again toward Jack.

He leaned back again, and his expression changed so quickly that she saw nothing in it but the kindness of the good old friend.

"What," he asked, "did you think love was to be? and what do you find that it is?"

"I thought that it was inevitable and entire happiness."

Jack smiled, a smile with a slight twist in it.

"In thinking that," he said, "you certainly made a mistake."

"I did not know how strong it was," she continued. "But I thought it was more sure. I did not know that it was always in danger."

"What," asked Jack, "is it especially in danger of?"

"There is death first of all."

"And that would end it?"

"It might not end it for the one who died, but for the one who lived there would be the world full of other men and women."

"I had imagined it the other way," said Jack. "For the one who died I am ready to suppose

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everything might be ended ; but for the one who remained — why, there might not be any other woman — or man. It appears, Anne, that I am more sentimental than you."

"It is only because you do not know so much," she told him.

"Ah!" said Jack. There was a slight pause, broken only by the sound of rain blown against the window.

"Tell me more of the things you have discovered about love," he asked.

Anne realized her weakness in having given voice to some of the bitter knowledge that had come to her through loving and being loved by Gino Curatulo. It was inevitable that Jack with his colder temperament and solid ethical standards should ignore either the loveliness or the terror of love as she knew it.

"We will not speak of these things again," she said quietly, "because we cannot understand each other."

Jack looked at the carpet.

"You say this man is ill," he said. "What is the matter with him?"

Anne told him as much as she knew, and Jack listened without change of attitude or expression.

"It does not sound as if he were going to die,"

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he commented dryly ; and rising he walked to the window, standing there some moments without speaking.

The memory of him standing so, staring into the rain, remained with Anne after the rather blank leave-taking which soon followed. It was a memory which matched many others which she had of him, for Jack's purposeful and oddly pregnant silences were characteristic of his interviews with her.

How impassive the bony profile was ! How controlled and inexpressive his personality compared with the warmth, the eager response, the movement and ardor of the Italian who had won her love ! But while she watched, she asked herself quickly if a woman's happiness would not be more safe with him than with Gino, and as quickly she answered, and turned from the answer. She had chosen, and was without regrets. She had accepted love with its ecstasies and perils as Gino gave it to her.

When Jack turned from the window he held out his hand.

"I must go to my charge," he said. "But I shall come again, for in the mornings I leave the boy in the custody of an Italian master. Where do you usually walk?"

"In the Borghese Gardens when the weather is

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fair," she said. "But Jack —" she hesitated, and continued bravely, "I cannot walk with you."

"Ah! he would n't like it?"

"No."

"Would n't he be glad to think there was a friend looking after you when you were lonely?"

"Not if the friend were another man."

"In that case I suppose it would be hard for him to believe the man was merely a friend, even if he were only myself."

"Yourself least of all."

"He seems to be a person who penetrates deep into the heart of things," commented Jack. "I wonder, now, what the bell-boy has done with my umbrella?"

When it was found Jack shook hands again and told her he should probably come and see her the next day — after her walk.

CHAPTER XXV

WARMTH IN THE GARDENS

SEVERAL days went by, and Gino wrote that he was better, then suddenly he ceased to write at all. But Anne had received her lesson of little faith, and she held firmly to the belief that he intended to surprise her by appearing without warning.

Jack came almost every day, and she would sometimes find him playing picquet with her father when she returned from her walk, and would sit by them, watching the game and enjoying the faint return of warmth to existence which she had experienced since her friend's arrival.

Mr. Warren was not always cheerful. His daughter's wan and pathetic face annoyed him, and having been but little in Europe he had never suffered from such a long affliction of rain — the element of all others he most disliked.

Jack assured him that even a short experience on the Continent proved weeks of daily rainfall to be no uncommon thing, and Mr. Warren, thinking of the comparative sunshine of his own land and

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the infrequent occasions on which he was forced by bad weather to lose golfing for more than a day at a time, found himself sighing with regret at his change of plans.

He even regretted, since he played so admirable a game of picquet and professed to be equally admirable upon the links, that Jack was not to be his son-in-law instead of the Italian whose existence seemed more and more mythical.

As the days went by Jack observed Anne's palor closely, and once he told her that she still looked ill, but that she would look better in a dress of a different color ; the particular shade of blue she was wearing was just the one that never suited her.

"If you would come with me to the Corso, I would help you choose the right thing," he said.

But Anne shook her head, recalling with a pang of remembered suffering the result of another evidence of Jack's susceptibility to color.

The day came at last when the skies cleared, the many fountains of Rome sparkled in warm sunshine, and street cries sounded cheerfully under the windows. Then Mr. Warren gathered his golf clubs under his arm, and took an early train with Jack to the Campagna where golf links awaited his inspection. Anne walked alone up the wide

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curve of the Via Veneto and passed under the old Roman wall of the Porto Pinciana into the gardens of the Villa Borghese.

It was the first time she had seen the gardens in the sunshine since her arrival, and the return of warmth and color to their loveliness comforted her. It seemed almost as though Gino must be near. She walked in the grove of stone pines through whose splendid aisles she had passed with him so often, and listened to the soft wash of winds among the branches that soared into sunshine above their shaven trunks. She wandered through the broad avenues, pausing often to remember that it was here, and here, that she had wandered with him in the shadows thrown by last spring's hot sunshine. Many of the trees were bare to-day, dead leaves had drifted into the basin of the "Fontana dei Cavalli," and through the groves, the avenues, and temples of the villa there seemed to move a whisper — there seemed to brood a memory of things that had passed away.

The American girl was conscious of it, and turning aside from the broad avenue, she walked between the pillars of a half-ruined temple where stood the mutilated statue of a woman, and leaning here, allowed a sense of the past to possess her. She lost her own melancholy in that of ancient

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years, and her nerves rested in the tender and impersonal sadness of that reverie which sometimes enters the imagination of living generations as they move over the playgrounds and battlefields of those who, once clamorous and eager, have passed so pitifully into the silence of dead centuries. Some day her own life, her's and Gino's, would so pass down the years, and was it still possible that she might stand with him again in this garden before the passing?

A carriage clattered through the avenue behind her, there was a cry, the carriage paused, and she turned as Gino sprang toward her. She heard herself call out his name once, and then for a moment she seemed to lose consciousness in the shock of her intense joy. He was holding her hands, and his voice, broken with emotion, was calling all the beloved names he had invented for her, when she first looked into his face and saw how thin it was.

"How ill you have been!" she cried; "you never told me how ill."

"It is nothing. It is over. I shall be better than ever in a week, you will see." And then he told her how he had not warned her of his coming because he wished to surprise her, but had written several letters dated ahead and left them to be posted after his departure, intending that the last

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should reach her the day of his arrival, for he knew she would be anxious if she heard nothing ; but there had been cholera on the Adriatic, and as he had come by sea the quarantine held him over for several days.

“ What I endured, my Anne, no words can ever tell,” he said. “ If I had not been already as strong as an ox I should have fallen ill again with the thought that you were waiting. I came into Rome this morning ; the accursed train was late, but I went at once to your hotel, and was told you had gone to walk in this direction, so I knew you must have come into the gardens.”

Anne laughed with the tears in her eyes, thinking of the dear, deceitful little notes he had sent to quiet her anxiety and guard the surprise of his coming. More than ever did he seem to her dear and childlike, more than ever did he seem conquering and manly.

“ You also have grown thin,” he told her ; “ but I think you are more lovely than ever.”

“ If I am thin, it is because you were away from me ; if I am lovely, it is because you have come back,” she said, and was going to add : “ Jack says I am not even pretty any more,” but closed her lips upon the words just in time. The thought of Jack’s presence in Rome gave her a sudden little

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gasp of fear in the midst of her happiness, but it was gone as quickly as a distant flicker of lightning through the summer night.

They walked through the gardens to the *campo* that is just behind the villa, and where, surrounded by walls and terraces, there is a grove of densely massed ilex trees. It was damp among the shadows, but they passed through them to where the sunlight fell warmly upon what seems as a detached façade of plaster, with benches built into rounded niches, and grated windows that look out upon the Campagna. Here they leaned, and she told Gino of the misery she had endured through his illness and absence.

“It frightened me,” she said; “for if I could suffer so, what would it be if you and our love were really in danger? I imagined hideous things, Gino, the kind of things you have taught me, the possibility of infidelities! of change! You do not know how foolish I was, or how wicked! I cannot bear to think of those hours. I asked what life was, that it should hold such torture. Now I ask what it is, to hold such joy. Heaven one moment so close — so close to the next when we fall into the burning pit. If I were a pagan I should say that some god with much humor and little pity was playing with us.”

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“That is love,” he said.

“It is terrible!”

“It is love,” he repeated ; and taking her unresisting hands he unbuttoned her gloves and drew them off, kissing the bare fingers one by one.

“Little fingers that have found my heart, I salute you,” he said. “Little palm that holds my heart, I salute you ! Little hands that have my happiness to break or keep, I salute you so — and so — and so — !”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SPORT OF THE GODS

THE morning passed, and by the sunny wall near the ilex trees Anne and Gino reached the sum of the world's rapture. Then they went back to the city, to the broad and modern Via Veneto with its circle of new hotels, and met Mr. Warren, who had just returned from his inspection of the golf links.

Anne cast a swift instinctive glance about the entrance of her hotel, and finding Jack was not there, she presented Gino to her father with a light heart and some pride, for she thought the man she loved had never looked better. In growing thin his appearance had become more than ever that of a man belonging to a romantic and distinguished race, and she knew that her father's slender patriotism would enable him to take delight in a son-in-law of so foreign an aspect.

They went upstairs together in the "lift," and Mr. Warren insisted that Gino stay to luncheon, which he ordered served in his private sitting-room. He also suggested champagne in honor of the occasion, but the Italian drew Anne aside.

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"Sweetheart," he said, "is it necessary that I drink champagne or else offend your kind father? After a night in that accursed train, and having eaten no breakfast, I fear champagne at this hour would cause my head to go round and to behave otherwise strangely, particularly as I am not wholly strong yet."

Anne laughed and told the truth to her father, who thought Gino quite right, but suggested that he might find a small whiskey and soda an excellent tonic. At the word whiskey the Italian could not repress an eloquent gesture of disgust.

"Forgive me for saying whiskey is horrible to me," he said. "Your Indians named it well when they called it 'fire-water.' You must pity us poor Italians for not being strong enough to rival you in drinking your whiskeys. We try hard to imitate you in this as in other things, and some of us appear to succeed, but our people cannot drink as you do. It means madness to our hot blood."

Mr. Warren was delighted, not only to save his purse, but with the frank and manly confession of an inability which men of his own race would be ashamed to admit. Deficient himself in that vigor which, in the north, so often demands the gratification of strong foods and wines, he was rejoiced to find himself about to become one of a people

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who, as he said, can become drunk on sunshine instead of whiskey, and can draw their life from cereals instead of poor beasts of the field and air. "One has a chance of becoming a finer organism," he said, with evident satisfaction; and expanded into his most delightful self before this man who was to become his son-in-law, and whose dark, expressive, and virile personality laid at rest any fears he possessed of finding an effete foreigner.

He forgot his discontent with the climate, though fresh rain-clouds were already gathering; and wondered how he could have thought of Jack as an advisable husband for his daughter. The young doctor would make such a son-in-law as thousands of American fathers might hope to have; but Gino Curatulo! The very name was a delight and an exotic.

The luncheon passed agreeably. Gino, with the courtesy and suppleness of Latin people, made himself charming to the older man, entering into his points of view, or disagreeing with deference and humor. He took his leave soon after luncheon, and Mr. Warren, enjoying his company too much to lose any of it, stayed inconsiderately in the room till the last moment, talking to Gino with his hand on his shoulder.

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"I am glad you have come, my boy," he said, "and it was time — it was time! There is a young American here who I suspect has been trying to take her away from you. *A propos*, my dear, did Jack find you in the Borghese Gardens? He said he was going to look for you."

Gino's courtesy remained perfect, but his rapid look at Anne, who was sitting near him on the arm of a sofa, was eloquent. What seemed to Mr. Warren an innocent pleasantry struck his daughter almost as a blow.

"I do not know whether he came or not." She forced herself to speak the words lightly. "I — we — were too much occupied to see who else walked in the Gardens."

She looked at Gino with entreaty, but his eyes no longer met hers. His courtesy, however, was still perfect, and he smiled upon Mr. Warren.

"Am I to understand that it is Jack who has been trying to take her from me?" he asked. "Or are there two — one who seeks to win her, and one who joins her in the Gardens?"

Mr. Warren laughed genially.

"No," he said, "there is only one, and that is Jack. He has been here every morning trying to console her for your absence, and I must tell you that she was decidedly more cheerful after he came ;

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but not as she is this morning, not with these bright cheeks." And he pinched his daughter's cheek playfully, too preoccupied to notice that it had suddenly grown pale.

Anne felt as though her father were toying with loaded pistols, which were going off one after another while he remained grotesquely serene and deaf to their reports. Wildly she searched for means to stop him, but felt herself paralyzed as though with nightmare.

"Jack admired the color of my cravat this morning," continued Mr. Warren playfully. "He says, Anne, that it is the color he was trying to describe to you the other morning as the one you should wear oftenest; but now some one else has taken his right to choose your colors, eh?"

The last firearm had exploded with deadly results, and while the detonation of it rang in her ears Anne was aware that her father still remained serene and Gino courteous.

"I remember once he chose the color of her hat. Now it is a dress," she heard Gino say. "This is interesting to know. For the future your daughter will doubtless abide by the young man's selections. I should be sorry to usurp any right granted Dr. Swift. Thank you, Mr. Warren, for a delightful luncheon."

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He shook hands with the older man, bowed ceremoniously to Anne, and left the room.

The girl followed Gino into the hall, where he stood pressing the electric button by the lift.

"Gino," she said entreatingly, "you are not going to be foolish again about Jack, are you?"

"Why, no," he answered, "I am not going to be 'foolish' about Jack. I have only just begun to be wise about him." He spoke with a slow and careful utterance unusual to him, and there was a smile upon his lips that seemed the smile of some alien and evil spirit.

Anne ignored the possible implication of his words.

"Shall you come again this evening?" she asked.

"I do not come again at all."

"You are mad! You are mad!"

"I am just become sane. They have told me that American girls are engaged sometimes to two, three — or more men at a time. I did not believe — but it is true, is it not?"

"Gino!"

"Several men at once?"

"Gino!"

"Enough! It is true. You can no longer tell me that Jack does not love you."

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She called his name again under her breath, for a chambermaid was coming through the hall. Her life seemed swinging wildly to its ruin, here, in a hotel passage-way, while a chambermaid passed!

"Tell me that he does not love you," commanded Gino, when the woman had gone.

Anne struggled within herself to deny the growing conviction that he did, and her self-control weakened.

"He has never told me—" The poor little defense wavering at the end gave her almost the appearance of guilt.

"Enough! He loves you! While I am ill, he consoles you. He walks with you in the Gardens. He is admitted into domestic intimacy. Do you think Gino Curatulo is a man or not, that discovering such things in the morning he comes back in the evening?"

From below came the sound of a rapidly mounting lift, and Anne heard it with wild bewilderment. The thing, the horribly grotesque, commonplace thing, was coming to take Gino away! He was going out of her life in a hotel elevator, and she could not speak to him because the old gentleman with a cold who had the room next to hers came out of it and stood by them waiting also to go down.

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Silently, civilly, with his hat in his hand, Gino waited for the older man to pass into the lift. Then he bowed low to Anne. "Good-by," he said, and stepped in also. The steel gate clashed into place, and as though hypnotized, she watched Gino's dark head till it sunk out of sight under the floor below.

To Mr. Warren who was disposing himself upon the sofa for an afternoon nap, she entered suddenly, and cried out with a loud harsh voice, —

"Father! what have you done?"

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed her father, lifting his head.

"What have you done to me?"

"I don't know," he said. "What, in fact, have I done?"

"You told him about Jack. You made him think things that are not true about Jack."

"Pooh!" Her father's easy vanity was disturbed by the suggestion of blame to himself. "Pooh! is that all? He must be a silly fellow. When he comes again I will tell him I was jesting. Now sit down, Anne, or go away, for I want my rest." He lay down again upon the sofa, and spread his handkerchief over his eyes. "I will tell him I was jesting," he repeated, "though for my part I believe it does men good not to be too sure

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of a woman. If a certain charming, though no longer very young, lady, had not allowed me to be so sure, I might have been a married man to-day. Now be a good girl, Anne, and run away."

She looked at the reclining figure, and it assumed the grotesque aspect of everything else in this mad and dreadful world.

"You do not understand," she cried.

Her father groaned.

"He is not coming back. He thinks I have let Jack make love to me while he was ill. He thinks I have walked with him in the Gardens, that I allow him intimacy, that he chooses the colors of my hat and dress, — that was because of what you said about your cravat, — a hat — a dress — a cravat — a hotel elevator — an old man with a cold — among such things one's life tumbles into ruins! Tell me, father, if one should laugh at such a life, or weep for it, or end it?"

Mr. Warren sat up and looked at his half-crazed daughter helplessly.

"Life in ruins!" he repeated. "You cannot mean that the man has broken his engagement."

Anne sat down and with her head in her hands began to laugh wildly.

"My dear, my dear!" protested Mr. Warren, "you really must control yourself. This is all very

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disturbing. If the young man has broken his engagement because of Jack he must be a silly fellow whom you are well rid of. But really — do be quiet, Anne, or you cannot hear what I say — I think you must take an exaggerated view of the — er — situation. You have had jealous quarrels with him before now, and they were always made up. Why should not this be made up? The man has not been well, and is probably over-excitabile himself. When he is calmer he will see his folly.”

Somewhat to his surprise Anne appeared to heed her father's words, though as a rule he could not but be conscious that they fell futilely upon her. She lifted her head with some eagerness.

“Yes, yes,” she said. “He has been ill. I did n't think of that. How could I have been so selfish! He has been ill, and is not himself. Our quarrels before have never seemed so fatal as this, but it is because he is not yet himself. I will write him — or I will go to him. I must think — I must think how to save our happiness.”

Alone in her room, Anne wrote to Gino.

“Beloved! you know that this is madness! You know that I love you — come back to me. I love you! Without you I do not breathe — the world is a dead planet. How could there be another man in it? You know that there is not. You know it, Gino,

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underneath this dreadful madness of yours. How could I explain? What could I say there in a public hallway? You will come back to me because you love me, and because you know my love for you. You will come this evening. When you say to yourself, 'Anne is waiting for me,' you will have to come to her."

The letter was sent by one of the hotel office-boys, and she asked to see him at once on his return.

"Did you wait for an answer?" she asked him.

"The signorina did not tell me if she wanted one. I saw the signore, who opened the door himself, and when I asked him if there was an answer he said: 'It is impossible that there should be one.'"

"Was that after reading the letter?"

"Yes, signorina."

Then Anne knew that he would not come; but outwardly she did not again lose her self-control.

"Of course there is a way out of this misery, for there is no reason, no sense, in it." She told her father: "I must think — I must think how to find the way."

But her night was sleepless, and no sleepless night is completely sane. Mr. Warren was startled by her appearance in his room the next morning while he was finishing his morning coffee in bed.

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She was dressed for the street, and told him she was going to Gino.

"That," said her father firmly, "is out of the question."

"I am going to Gino," she repeated, "because it is the only thing to do. I thought I would tell you so that you would not be frightened to find my room empty."

"It is impossible," said her father, staring at her. "It would be an outrageous performance, — bad enough at home, impossible in a Latin country."

His daughter continued to put on her gloves with trembling fingers.

"I shall not go yet," she said. "I shall walk about till it is the hour just before he always leaves his rooms."

"I protest — I forbid!" said Mr. Warren, pushing aside his mail, and preparing to get out of bed.

Anne moved towards the door.

"I am sorry you cannot see it is the only way to save our happiness," she said, "if it can be saved. Oh, father, do you think it can still be saved!"

The question came as a sudden cry from one half crazed with fear; and while Mr. Warren was still protesting against her action and struggling into his dressing-gown, his daughter left him.

He rang hastily for the *valet de chambre*; but

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the man delayed his arrival, and when Mr. Warren gave him imperative orders to stop Anne and tell her to return immediately, it was found that she had already left the hotel.

He next wrote to Jack, asking him to come round at once, for there was trouble between Anne and Gino, and he — her father — did not know where to turn.

Jack arrived just as Mr. Warren had finished shaving, an office he performed in such confusion of spirit that he cut himself twice, as he querulously asked Jack to observe.

"What is wrong between your daughter and this man?" asked Jack, ignoring the demand for sympathy.

"*You*, my boy. *You* are what is wrong. I will tell you all about it the moment I have got my cravat straight."

"Tell me now," commanded Jack.

"It was about this very cravat," continued Mr. Warren, struggling with it before the mirror. "He came back yesterday morning, lunched here, and a charming fellow he is, too. We took to each other at once. And then because I made some playful remarks about your passing the mornings here and wishing Anne to buy a waist the color of this cravat — there is a quarrel. I did not see any of it,

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but Anne told me — and now the engagement is broken, and Anne seems to have lost her mind. She has gone to him — gone to his rooms.”

“What!” shouted Jack.

“Yes, yes. That’s why I sent for you; but don’t talk so loud. You make me more nervous than I am already. What had we better do about it?”

“Where is your coat?” cried Jack, still shouting. “Where is your hat? I shall have a carriage at the door in two minutes.”

“But, my dear fellow, I positively can’t get ready — ”

“You must get ready, because you are the only person who can save Anne.”

“I suppose so! I suppose so!” murmured Mr. Warren, flattered, as Jack had intended, by a sense of responsibility. “God bless my soul, the boy has not brought up my boots and I have only my carpet slippers! The other pair I left behind at Florence. How can I go out in my carpet slippers, and it is raining again!”

Jack relentlessly held his coat for him to put on.

“How long ago did she leave?” he asked.

“It was ten o’clock.”

Jack looked at the clock.

“My God!” he exclaimed. “She may be alone with him at this moment.”

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Mr. Warren looked into Jack's face and saw that he was afraid.

"You think she is in danger?" he murmured, his jaw dropping weakly.

"Put on your coat," was Jack's answer.

Mr. Warren did so tremulously.

"But how can I go out in carpet slippers?" he murmured.

"Where are his rooms?" asked Jack.

They looked at each other vacantly.

"You don't know?" asked Jack.

Mr. Warren shook his head.

"Take your hat," said Jack, "and come downstairs."

At the office they got Gino's address from the porter.

"You mean the Signor Curatulo who lives in the Via Julia where the signorina sent a note yesterday?"

"That is the one. Is the Via Julia near?"

"No, far — far over by the Tiber."

"Get a carriage and tell the man to drive there as fast as he can."

A shrill whistle from the concierge brought several *carrozze* clattering to the door, and Jack shoved Mr. Warren, who was shivering in his carpet slippers, under the hood of one of them.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE END

ANNE walked about the streets for nearly an hour, trying to assemble her mental forces for the struggle that was to come; but her mind slid helplessly from one possible line of defense to another, unable to grasp any of them long enough to measure their expediency. Convinced that the happiness of her life depended upon what she should say or do during the next hour, she yet found herself unable to choose the words she must speak, the few words out of all those in the world which were the ones that could bring Gino back to her. She could not meet him simply with the truth: he was not so constituted that he could believe her. Bitter experience had taught her the difficulties of dealing with him during his attacks of jealousy, and it was possible that to control him she should use a tact, an art, a cajolery which neither temperament nor education had given her. An older or cleverer woman would have said: "Wait. When his anger has had time to fall he will begin to feel the pain of wanting you; that will be your hour."

THE END

But there was no one to say to Anne, "Wait."

When she passed under the huge bare entrance to the old palace in which Gino lived, and asked the porter if he was at home, she still did not know what she should say to him; and while climbing the three flights of wide and echoing stairways to his apartment, and even while waiting at his door after she had pulled the old-fashioned bell-rope, she still did not know how she should meet him, whether with reproach or entreaty, or with a desperate burst of sobbing in his arms.

The bell jangled feebly somewhere in the distance behind the door, and after a pause she heard steps coming toward it. The door opened, and Gino himself stood before her.

For a full moment she did nothing. Gino's body stood before her, but the man who looked at her through Gino's eyes was a stranger. Anne stared at him silently: what words could she say to a stranger?

He stepped aside and opened the door wide. "Do you honor me by wishing to come in?" he asked. His courtesy was wounding as a blow, and Anne shivered under it. She looked at him still silently, her eyes wide with pain and reproach; then she followed him over the threshold of his door and into a large, sparsely furnished room, with windows

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that looked down upon the slow-moving, faded waters of the Tiber.

A less intelligent man than Curatulo would have misunderstood the young girl's coming to him alone as Anne had done. A less honorable one, of which there were many in his own social world, would have taken terrible advantage of it. But Curatulo neither misunderstood nor took advantage. He offered her a chair, still with wounding courtesy, and seated himself at some distance.

"My servant has just gone out," he explained. "Otherwise I should have been able to receive you with more fitting ceremony."

Anne sat very still and looked at him. Colorless, in her dull rainy-day clothes, with her pallid face and desolate, entreating eyes, she sat and looked at him, and he looked back through half-closed lids, and was armed with jealousy and wounded self-love. Underneath the superficial brightness of his eyes there smouldered something evil.

"Gino!" The word fell between them beseechingly in the quiet room.

He looked at her without reply. Some day he would be kind again, generous to his friends, tender to women and children, loving and winning love. To-day he looked at Anne cruelly, believing that she had deceived him, trifled with his manhood,

THE END

betrayed the trust he had reposed in her when he offered her his name.

“Gino, this thing cannot be! You cannot spoil our lives for an insane fancy. Gino, listen to me!”

He rose and occupied a chair more nearly in front of her, sitting astride of it, and folding his arms on the back.

“I am listening.”

His tone implied, “I listen not because I believe, but because I am curious to hear what you can invent.”

She felt the implication, and struggled desperately against the paralysis it put upon her.

“You know that I love you,” she said. “Can you think that, loving you, I could play with Jack? You know that I love you. Gino — answer me! You know that I love you!”

Pride dictated a scornful withdrawal of her defense. Self-respect almost demanded that she cease to abase herself before the willful and grotesque suspicions of this man. But there are moments when pride and self-respect are not more than words, and for Anne this was one of the moments. She was fighting for the thing that seemed so much more precious than life itself that nothing else in life or herself mattered. Breathlessly she described such intercourse as had passed between herself and

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Jack during the autumn, and sought to show Gino the triviality and innocence of the things he had distorted into meaning betrayal. She told him how it happened that Jack knew of her morning walks, and played picquet with her father, and concerned himself with the color of her dress, but she felt these explanations to be futile: against the bulwark of his conviction they were no more than the popping of peas against an ironclad. While he was helpless through illness and absence, the woman he loved had seen another man daily and intimately, allowing his presence to comfort her. He put this before her in one short sentence.

"I was comforted," she said, "as we all must be comforted by the presence of a brother or dear friend."

"I have no knowledge of such brothers and such friends," he answered. "I take off my hat to them. I say 'Good-by.'"

"Do you think," said Anne, "that he is in Rome to see me?"

"For what else is he here?"

"To take care of a delicate child."

Gino did not immediately reply to this, but his eyes grew more bright and more hard as he considered it. Then he laughed.

"Do you think me a fool?" he asked.

THE END

She began to realize that the incredible was happening: she was losing hope of saving their happiness. The wonderful thing was slipping from her grasp, and in her agony she rose suddenly and almost screamed aloud, putting her hands on her lips to smother the sound.

“Gino!” she cried, “I will not have it so!” and kneeling on the ground in front of him and putting up her hands she shook the strong brown ones clasped so relentlessly on the back of his chair.

“I will not have it so! Look at me! Am I not the Anne whom you love? Look at me! Can you not trust my love beyond a few chance happenings? Can you walk again through the streets and gardens where we have walked, and think that you have distrusted me and sent me from you knowing, as you will know, that it was not possible for me to see another man in the world but you. You will say, ‘It was here, and here, that we passed together! It was by this fountain that I waited for her one morning! It was on such a day as this that I first knew she loved me!’ Ah, my dear, my dear, can you say these things and bear them, knowing that I was always true to you? Can you say, ‘It was here again that we talked of our future, that we planned our home, that we—’” Her voice broke. “Look at me! Can you do so and not know

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how wholly I love you? Speak to me, oh, my dear, my dear! speak to me and say that now you believe!"

"When I was helpless through illness and absence, you had this man with you daily," said Gino, "this man whose love for you you cannot deny."

His words came like a blow. She looked into his eyes and saw that they had not changed, under her pressure his fingers had not moved, either to return her caress or to withdraw from it, and she felt — as most women do at some moment in their lives — the terrible strength of the man, — not the strength which endures, which suffers, which can set aside its will, which can pardon; but the strength which breaks and crushes, which annihilates all that stands before it. Against this strength Anne knew at last that she was powerless. She looked into his unyielding face, and her fingers slid from his. She drew away from him where she knelt on the floor, and gazed at him bewildered and appalled.

"So it is over," she whispered. "It is over!"

Gino never forgot the look of her face, the desolation of it, the bewilderment, the eyes which said so plainly, "What kind of being is this man that I love?"

THE END

He did not understand the comparative quiet of her grief; it seemed to him almost as no grief at all compared with the emotion which a woman of his own race would have developed in the same situation.

She put her hands to her head with an automatic feminine effort to arrange her hair, and still gazed at him. She sought to rise, and tripping over her dress, staggered in her weakness and nearly fell; but finding her balance began to move from him very slowly with her back toward the door, still looking at him as though fascinated by the cruelty that was in him, and touching the furniture behind her half blindly as she moved.

"Is it," she asked in a toneless voice, "is it that you do not think I love you?"

"No, I believe that you love me, though to my poor Italian brain it seems a strange love since you are able to share me with others."

She did not reply; but moved from him, always with the same appalled and stricken face.

Suddenly Gino rose and cried out harshly: "I believe that you love me, and you shall not go from me like this! You have deceived me, and you shall remember it." He seized her in his arms. "You shall have something to remember, maiden that I have called Puritan!"

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And he began to kiss her madly, on her eyelids, her lips, her throat, while she struggled desperately, — for the kisses were not of love. He seemed to be quenching some dreadful thirst upon her, and she felt each kiss as a wound — a wound to her body and her spirit. The terrible things beat upon her pitilessly, blinding and searing, strangling her breath, crushing her body till they seemed to scar her soul and she lay almost unconscious in his arms. Then he let her go. As she reeled from him he cried out with a wild gesture: —

“There! you may go! I have loved you well. My God, I have been fool enough to love you well! But you may go; and now, Puritan maiden, you can never forget, for I have marked you with my kisses!”

Out in the street, Anne, staggering against the palace wall, felt a dash of rain and wind on her face. A carriage clattering by nearly hit her, swerved to one side, and she heard Jack’s cry as he sprang from it.

“Anne! Thank God!”

Clinging to his supporting arm, she lifted bewildered and stricken eyes to his face.

“He has killed it,” she said. “He has killed love!” And echoing through her desolate spirit

THE END

were the words: "He has killed love with his kisses."

Jack wrapped a coat about her, and buttoned it down the front as though she had been a little girl.

"It has begun to rain again," he said, "and I have come to take you home."

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